

CLASSIC POP PRESENTS

PRINCE

A CELEBRATION

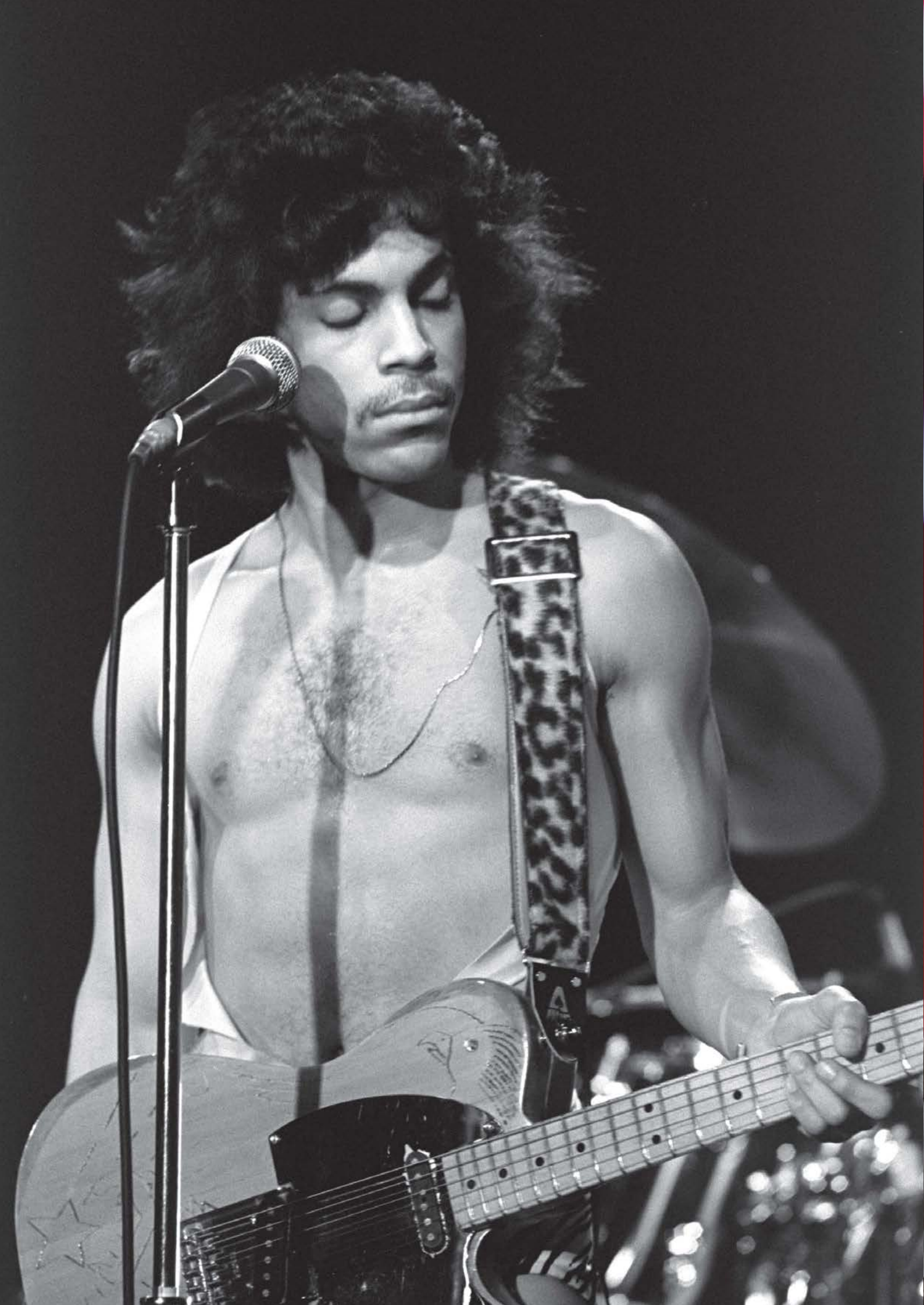
132-PAGE
SPECIAL
TRIBUTE

PRINCE THROUGH THE DECADES... THE MAN AND HIS MUSIC

ANTHEM



CLASSIC POP
PRESENTS
PRINCE
PRICE £6.99



PRINCE

1958–2016

THE PEOPLE WHO ARE MOST REVERED IN THE WORLD OF MUSIC ARE OFTEN THE 'DISRUPTERS' – THE INNOVATORS, THE GAME-CHANGERS, THE ONES WHO FIND IT IMPOSSIBLE TO THINK INSIDE THE BOX; FROM HENDRIX TO JACKSON, FROM BOWIE TO MADONNA...

ON 21 APRIL 2016, POP MUSIC LOST ITS DEFINITIVE DISRUPTOR: PRINCE ROGERS NELSON...

How can I describe the artist we celebrate here? A mystery wrapped in a riddle inside an enigma; a true disruptor. Prince's musical output may have been prolific but that was the tip of the iceberg. He caused as much of a disruption with the music he didn't release as that he did. He wrote a new song every day; recorded with Miles Davis; put together an album called *Camille* under a female persona and created classics such as *Le Grind*, *Superfunkycalifragisexy* and *Cindy C.* for the legendary *Black Album* but stopped it all – and more – from ever seeing the light of day.

Prince disrupted the hackneyed convention of the TV interview when he appeared on the BBC's *Sunday Show* in 1995. Wanting to withdraw from the business of music but still make a statement, he agreed to be interviewed on the condition that he wouldn't show his face or speak a single word. When asked why, I remember he gestured to an accomplice who translated, "because it's like that, and that's the way it is."

That might seem to be the hallmark of a reclusive, secretive



pop star. But Prince was totally extroverted. He holds the record for consecutive nights at The O2: 21 in total, all of which sold out and were followed by an equally extravagant after-show gig.

My favourite of all Prince's disruptions? The symbol. If you've ever felt trapped in a job or a contract by The Man, this is what you do. Leave them with the name they think they own and change yours to something they can't even pronounce, let alone spell.

What does the symbol signify? "You look at the male and female and combine into two, it's unification," explained its designer Sotera Tschetter. "And together, they are earth. It's called the love symbol because everything he did, he did with passion and love."

For the eruptions and disruptions, for taking the rule book, rewriting it and then ripping it to shreds, Prince, 'love symbol', we salute you.

Ian Peel *Founder and Editor-at-Large*



THE CONTRIBUTORS



Andrew Dineley is the author behind *Classic Pop* magazine's regular *Pop Art* series. He has interviewed dozens of the creative legends who have been responsible for many of music's most iconic record covers.



Mark Lindores grew up during the golden age of pop mags, devouring *Smash Hits* and *Number One*. Writing about the artists he used to read about for *Classic Pop*, *Total Film* and *Mixmag*, he is living the dream of his 15-year-old self.



Steve Harnell has been writing about music for almost two decades, covering everything from soul, pop and rock to country and hip-hop, as well as contributing to a variety of music magazines and daily newspapers.



Andy Price Having received his Masters in music, Andy has been a music journalist for the past three years, for both 'making' and 'listening' titles, and takes an in-depth look at Prince's female collaborators for this special issue of *Classic Pop*.



Anthem Publishing

Suite 6, Piccadilly House,
London Road, Bath, BA1 6PL
Tel +44 (0)1225 489984
www.classicpopmag.com

FOUNDER, EDITOR-AT-LARGE

Ian Peel

ian.peel@anthem-publishing.com

MANAGING EDITOR

Gary Walker

CONSULTANT EDITOR

Owen Bailey

CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Jenny Cook

COMMISSIONING EDITOR

Andy Jones

DESIGNER

Kate McDonnell

PRODUCTION EDITOR

Kim Clayden

MANAGING DIRECTOR

Jon Bickley

jon.bickley@anthem-publishing.com

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

Paul Pettengale

paul.pettengale@anthem-publishing.com

PUBLISHER

Simon Lewis

simon.lewis@anthem-publishing.com

PRINTING

Polestar UK Print Ltd

Tel +44 (0)1582 678900

DISTRIBUTION

Marketforce (UK) Ltd

5 Churchill Place, Canary Wharf,

London, E14 5HU

Tel +44 (0)20 37879001

LICENSING ENQUIRIES

Regina Erak

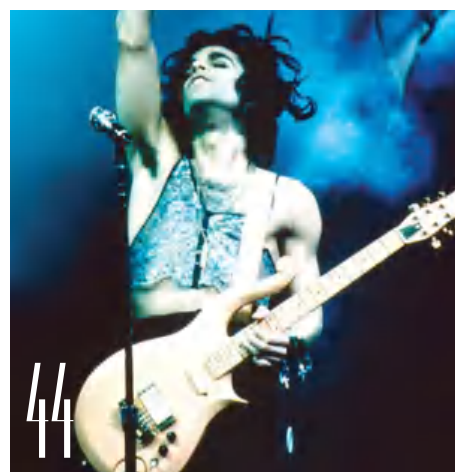
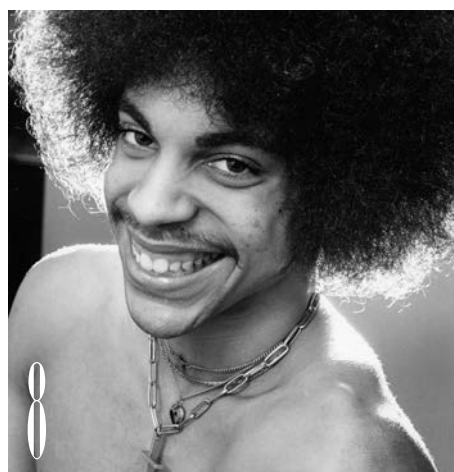
Tel +44 (0)7753 811 622

regina.erak@globalworks.co.uk

ANTHEM PUBLISHING

All content copyright of Anthem Publishing Ltd 2016, all rights reserved. All images © Getty Images unless marked otherwise. While we make every effort to ensure that the factual content of *Classic Pop* magazine is correct, we cannot take any responsibility nor be held accountable for any factual errors printed. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or resold without prior consent of Anthem Publishing Ltd. *Classic Pop* recognises all copyrights contained within the issue. Where possible, we acknowledge the copyright holder.

All images © Getty except where otherwise marked



DECADES

1970S: THERE'S NOTHING THAT I WOULDN'T DO 8
Paul Lester details the early years and how Prince's upbringing and early musicianship would shape the artist and an incredible four-decade long career

EARLY 1980S: BABY I'M A STAR 24
The start of the 80s was a time when Prince stepped effortlessly between genres and instruments to hone his craft as he approached world domination

LATE 1980S: POP LIFE 44
Towards the end of the 80s Prince could do no wrong. Paul Lester explains how million-selling records and films made him an almost unstoppable force

1990S: MY NAME IS PRINCE 64
Or not... The 90s was a confusing time for fans of the artist known as, and then formerly known as, Prince. Mark Lindores covers a decade in which he had to deal with both record-company battles and personal tragedy

2000S: THERE'LL NEVER B ANOTHER LIKE ME 86
After the chaos of the 90s, the new millennium could only get better. Luckily, a series of dramatic live appearances meant Prince was soon centre-stage again

2010S: CONTROVERSY 108
Free albums and high-profile battles with the internet meant that Prince was controversial to the end, but also prolific



PRINCE ♀

CONTENTS



FEATURES

UNDER THE COVERS PART 1 20
 Prince wrote thousands of songs, but of course, he didn't keep them all to himself. From Stevie Nicks to Sheila E, we count down the best Prince songs as sung by other artists in the first part of our Prince covers chart

CLASSIC ALBUM: PURPLE RAIN 38
Purple Rain was the album that defined Prince as an artist and marked the time when he truly became a global icon

THE LOWDOWN 54
 So prolific – and successful – was Prince during the 80s that we have a special feature on the defining musical and video moments from his output in that decade

UNDER THE COVERS PART 2 58
 The concluding rundown of the best Prince songs recorded by famous and not so famous artists. It's a top 10 without comparison

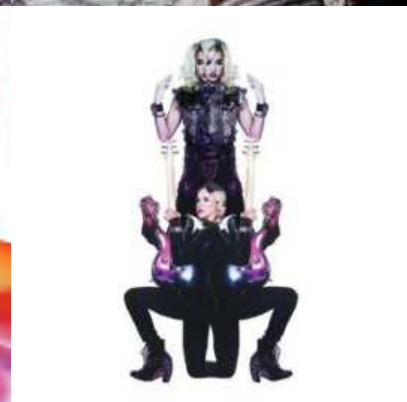
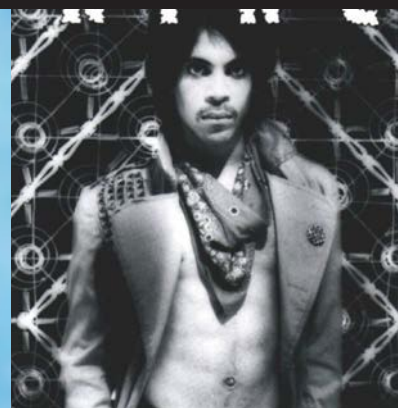
WOMEN, NOT GIRLS, RULE MY WORLD 80
 Prince's career was shaped by women – Andy Price reveals the key figures in both his professional and personal lives

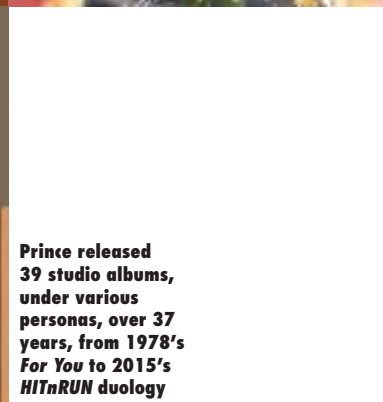
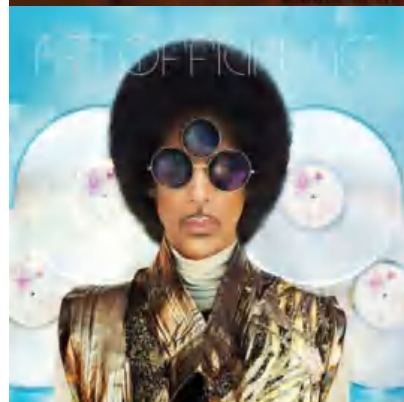
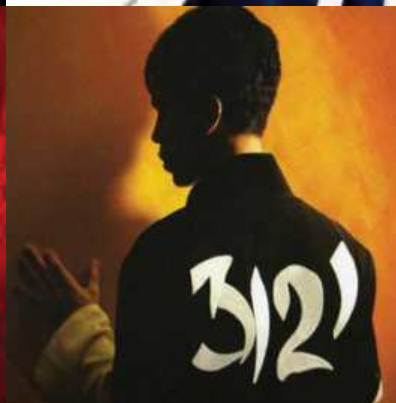
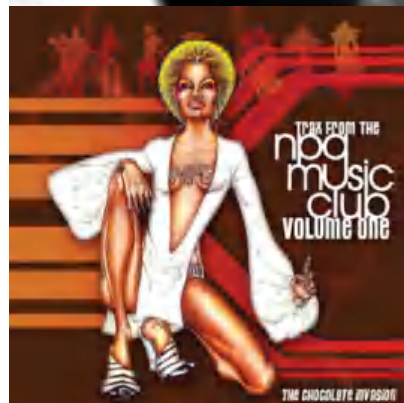
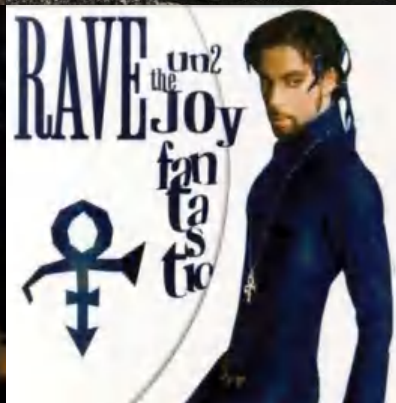
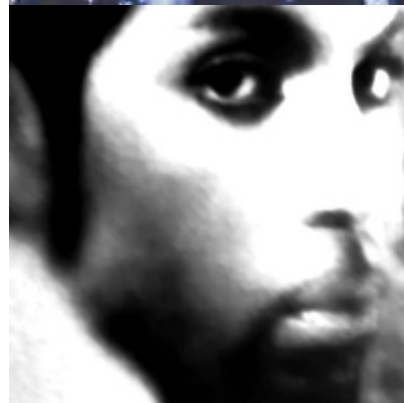
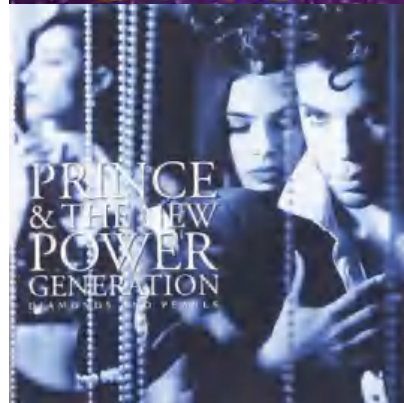
POP ART 102
 Over nearly 40 years of releases, Prince's sleeve art was as varied as it was striking. Andrew Dineley gets access to a superfan collection of Prince releases and assembles the best, the rarest and the most iconic Prince cover art

U GOT THE LOOK 120
 Prince's image changed almost as often as his music. Mark Lindores traces four decades of shifting styles but always a look that remained as unique as his music

SO MUCH TO ANSWER FOR: MINNEAPOLIS 126
 Prince's influence on the music world cannot be overstated. We examine the impact of the man and the protégés within his home town who went on to define recordings from everyone from Janet Jackson to The Human League

THE STARS REACT 130
 Prince's death shocked not just his huge fanbase, but musicians, celebrities and politicians across the world





Prince released 39 studio albums, under various personas, over 37 years, from 1978's *For You* to 2015's *HITNRUN* duology



1 9 7 0 s

There's **NOTHING** *that I wouldn't do*

PRINCE MAY HAVE ONLY RELEASED RECORDS IN THE LAST TWO YEARS OF THE 70S, BUT IT WAS ENOUGH TO MAKE A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT. WE LOOK AT HIS EARLY LIFE AND TENTATIVE EMERGENCE AS A STAR

PAUL LESTER

Prince, aged 19, in a series of images shot by photographer Robert Whitman

© Robert Whitman/The Licensing Project

PRINCE

hit the public eye at the end of the 70s, when the prolific

wunderkind began his recording career in earnest. His first two albums, *For You* (1978) and *Prince* (1979), were intriguing efforts, albeit commercially and critically outshone by contemporaneous releases from Chic, Michael Jackson and Earth, Wind & Fire.

Nobody would have guessed from these two long-players that Prince would dominate the next 10 years. But they were promising: of their time, if not defining it, in the way that his 80s output indisputably did.

Prince didn't exactly arrive out of the blue as a fully formed major-label artist in 1978, however. Events of the early part of that decade in particular had shaped him as a musician and as a performer.

Prince Rogers Nelson was born on 7 June, 1958. At the start of the 70s he was 11 years old, and still coming to terms with his parents' divorce.

His father, John Lewis Nelson, a pianist and composer in a Minneapolis jazz band, had left the family home on Logan Avenue in 1968. Prince and his sister Tyka had to fend for themselves while their mother, Mattie Shaw, a part-time singer, went out to work. Over the next few years, his parents would acquire new partners, leading to new siblings and half-siblings. "There was a lot of illegitimacy – different fathers, different mothers," he told *NME* in 1981.

There was a phase when he moved between the homes of his parents, friends and relatives. "I was constantly running from family to family," he said. "I didn't like being shuffled around." His first manager, Owen Husney, noted that Prince learned early on that the only person he could truly depend on was himself. "If you're a control freak like him," he said of the future studio monomaniac, "you're just trying to control your environment so you won't get hurt."

SOLACE IN MUSIC

The other problem with which the young Prince had to contend was bullying. He sought solace in music, particularly playing the piano that his dad had left in the family home. "He left the piano behind when he left us behind," he recalled. "I wasn't allowed to touch it when he still lived with us."

Prince wrote his first tune, *Funk Machine*, on that piano at just seven years old. As his mother recounted in a 1984 *Minneapolis Star Tribune* interview, "he could hear music even from a very early age. When he was three or four, we'd go to the department store and he'd jump on the radio, the organ, any type of instrument there was. I'd have to hunt for him, and that's where he'd be – in the music department."

Before Prince had hit double figures, his other great obsession – sex – began to develop. He would search

out his mother's collection of porn magazines, which he would pore over for hours. "She had a lotta interesting stuff," Prince revealed. "Certainly that

affected my attitude towards my sexuality."

Luckily, he found an outlet for all his pent-up feelings and frustrations in music and performance. He formed his first band at 13, while studying at Minneapolis' Central High School. He recruited his second cousin, Charles Smith, and his neighbour and friend from elementary school, André Anderson (later known as André Cymone, of Prince And The Revolution).

Prince's father bought him his first electric guitar, so he naturally assumed those duties, while Anderson played bass and Smith chose drums. The band originally went by the name of Phoenix and had a brief existence as Soul Explosion, but eventually settled for Grand Central, sometimes known as Grand Central Corporation.

By his mid-teens, it became evident that one instrument would never be enough to satisfy Prince. In 1973, while in junior high, he met James Samuel

He sought solace in music,
**PARTICULARLY THE PIANO HIS DAD HAD
LEFT IN THE FAMILY HOME...
HE WROTE HIS FIRST TUNE AGED SEVEN**

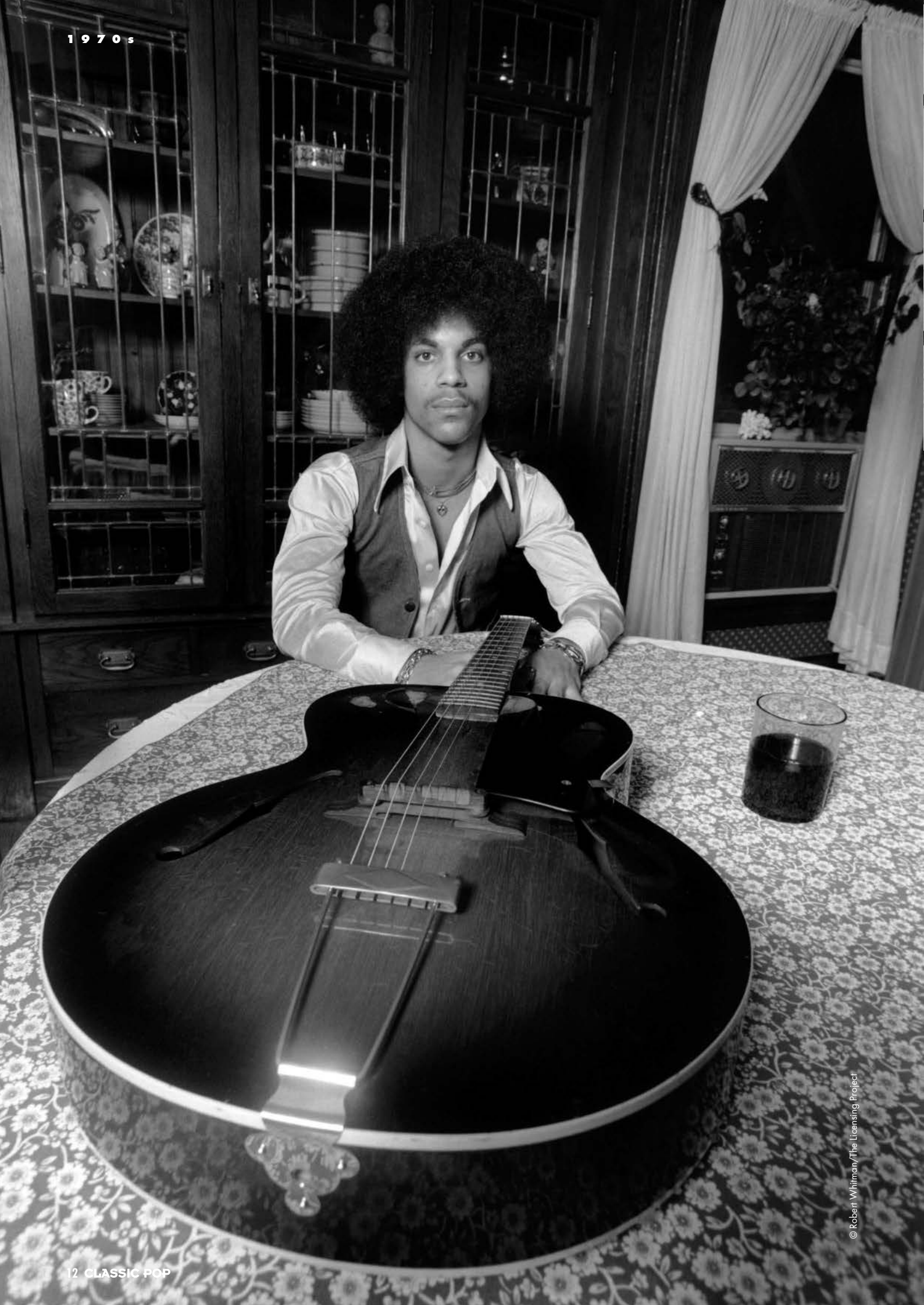
POP UP Prince's early fascination with musical instruments meant that he quickly found his way around piano, drums and guitar – and apparently, he learned the latter by tuning to an open A chord rather than standard tuning





Prince's manager, Owen Husney, commissioned the series of photos seen here and over the page for a 'brochure' to send to record companies

1970s



© Robert Whitman/The Licensing Project

Prince outside
the Schmitt Music
Company building
in downtown
Minneapolis, in 1977

'Jimmy Jam' Harris III, a future member of The Time and songwriting partner of Terry Lewis. Jam was impressed not just by Prince's work ethic, but by the breadth of his talent as a multi-instrumentalist.

Jam said later: "We were in a band to back up the choir at school. I was gonna play drums, and I knew Prince played keyboards. He showed up at practice, picks up a guitar and plays, note for note, the intricate solo from Chicago's *Make Me Smile*. I made the mistake of getting up from the drums, and he sat there and killed 'em."

JAM CENTRAL

Prince continued to perform with Grand Central until he graduated from high school, although there were changes in personnel – Smith was replaced by Morris Day (later lead singer of The Time and Prince's nemesis in the *Purple Rain* movie).

By then, Prince was playing piano and guitar as they performed at clubs and parties around Minneapolis. Attendees testify to a young musician in thrall to Stevie Wonder and James Brown, Jimi Hendrix and Carlos Santana, the pioneering funk-soul of Sly & The Family Stone, the acid jams of Parliament-Funkadelic, the orchestral disco of Earth, Wind & Fire, and the multifaceted rock of enigmatic 70s musician Todd Rundgren. A further sign of Prince's eclecticism was that Grand Central also covered Steely Dan and Grand Funk Railroad.

When he was 17, Prince gave his first interview, and although it wouldn't be his last, future encounters with the press would be few and far between. Dated 16 February, 1976, it was with his high-school newspaper, the *Central High Pioneer*, and pictured a young afro'd Prince seated at a piano.

"I play with Grand Central Corporation. I've been playing with them for two years," he explained, unusually dissing his home town ("I was born here,

unfortunately," he said), perhaps because, as he saw it, he should have achieved recognition from the outside world by now. He continued: "I think it is very hard for a band to make it in this State, even if they're good. Mainly because there aren't any big record companies or studios... if we would have lived in Los Angeles or New York or some other big city, we would have gotten over by now."

He added that he enjoyed school, if only because of the music facilities, and boasted that he could play several instruments. Plus he sang, although he gave up saxophone in seventh grade. He was, he confessed, self-taught, playing by ear.

"I've had about two lessons, but they didn't help much," he noted. Nevertheless, the diligent Prince advised pupils who wanted to learn an instrument

"to get a teacher unless they are very musically inclined. One should learn all their scales, too. That is very important." He concluded that his band was "in

the process of recording an album" of self-composed material and that it was due for release that summer. His ambition, finally, was "to go to college".

Soon after this interview, the band changed their name to Champagne and carried on gigging locally. But it was clear that Prince had set his sights on being more than just a member of a band.

Virtually concurrent to all this activity was Prince's brief involvement with 94 East, the band formed by Pepe Willie, the husband of Prince's cousin, Shauntel Manderville. Willie – whose uncle was a founding member of Little Anthony And The Imperials – hired André Anderson and Prince to record tracks he had written. Prince contributed guitar and co-wrote a tune called *Just Another Sucker*. Further tracks later saw the light of day via the LP release, *Minneapolis Genius – The Historic 1977 Recordings*. It was the first time that Prince had recorded in a studio.

WHEN HE WAS 17, *Prince gave*
his first interview:
FUTURE PRESS ENCOUNTERS WOULD
BE FEW AND FAR BETWEEN

POP UP In 1975, Pepé Willie invited a then-teenaged Prince to record his first-ever session. "Prince played better than a professional session player, and I've been to a lot of sessions," said Willie



Lover BOY

PRINCE LIVE, ON VIDEO, ON RECORD

SOFT AND WET

WARNER BROS, MARCH 1978

Prince's first single was a racy, risqué sign of ribald things to come. "Hey, lover, I got a sugarcane / That I wanna lose in you / Baby can you stand the pain?" he enquired in a teasing androgynous falsetto that suggested he could assume a male or female role in whatever romantic scenario he envisioned. Its sparse, staccato, stop-start rhythm presaged later funk-pop masterworks such as *Kiss* and *Black Sweat*. The B-side, meanwhile, showcased another side of Prince, all bluesy and forlorn, with an intricate guitar figure at the start and lyrics of the "my baby done left me" variety.



FOR YOU

WARNER BROS, APRIL 1978

As soon as you heard the album's rousing *a cappella* title tune, with Prince's voice multi-tracked to sound like a choir of sexed-up seraphim, you knew that here was somebody capable of greatness. One glance at the credits — it would have been easier to list what he didn't do — confirmed the arrival of a major talent. Too often dismissed by critics as a weak first foray, *For You* displays many of the elements that would make Prince a superstar in the 80s: the anguished cries, the consummate mastery of everything from rocked-up funk to strings-drenched slow jams — already in place.



PRINCE

WARNER BROS, OCTOBER 1979

I Wanna Be Your Lover was almost as arresting an album opener as *Let's Go Crazy* would be six years later. *Why You Wanna Treat Me So Bad?* was irresistible synth-funk with a hint of new wave, like Sly Stone if he joined The Cars. *Sexy Dancer* was the sound of a proficient unit tightly jamming — and astonishingly, Prince was that proficient unit. *With You* appeared to have strayed in from a Stylistics album. Then there was *Bambi*, which rocked loud and hard. There was no name yet for the places he and his arsenal of instruments could go.



JUST AS LONG AS WE'RE TOGETHER

WARNER BROS, NOVEMBER 1978

As though to prove how quickly Prince was moving, Warners decided to issue this track from his debut a month after the eponymous second album. It seemed like a blast from the dim and distant past, despite being taken from a long-player barely eight months old. *Just As Long As We're Together* was frisky pop-funk. It reached 91 on the R&B charts, but failed to enter the pop charts. Luckily, Prince wouldn't have to wait long for a bona-fide crossover hit.



Willie reminisced to *Rolling Stone* in 2016, just after Prince's death. "He was definitely a better guitar player than me," he laughed. "Prince had desire. He was not going to fail at anything he did musically. That's what I admired about him the most... I've never seen a musician like Prince, and I don't know if we're going to see anybody like him again."

IMPLIED NAUGHTY SEXUALITY

In early 1976, Prince and Anderson recorded a demo at ASI Studio, Minneapolis. That spring, there was further recording at Moonound, where the 17-year-old Prince impressed studio owner and producer Chris Moon. Moon offered Prince free studio time in return for collaborating on some songs, allowing him to increase his knowledge of recording and gain valuable experience of composing and performing.

Their deal effectively signalled the demise of Champagne, but meant Prince could now focus on developing himself as a solo artist. He worked around the clock and came up with several songs, one of which, *Baby*, would make it onto his debut album.

According to *Prince: The First Decade*, by Per Nilsen, it was Moon who encouraged Prince to pursue a risqué direction with his lyrics and image. "Moon came up with a concept he termed 'implied naughty sexuality': sexually suggestive lyrics that used teasing word-play and metaphors so that they could be interpreted different ways," wrote Nilsen.

Prince soon had the words for a track entitled *Soft And Wet* and 13 other songs — enough for an album. Buoyed by his new music, he headed for New York in a bid to secure a record contract. Initially unsuccessful, things started to move when Owen Husney, a Minneapolis businessman, concert promoter and ad-agency owner, heard Prince's tape. Husney signed Prince, still only 18, to a management contract, and raised \$50,000 to support him until he got a deal. It was Husney's idea to create mystique around Prince. There were no clippings of articles or photos in their press pack, just a single, terse line of copy. He decided, too, to tell record companies Prince was a year younger than he really was.

Husney helped Prince create a demo at Sound 80 Studios in Minneapolis, with producer/engineer David Rivkin, aka David Z, who had recorded Grand Central in 1975. "He did all the instruments," Rivkin later said. "He had a little cassette machine into which he hummed each part. The horn part, the guitar part — he had it all separated. It was really evolved."

He also noted that Prince was a little diffident in company. "When anyone came in the studio while he was singing, he wanted me to turn the light off because he didn't want anybody to look at him. He got over that shyness, that's for sure."

Husney sent the demo out to record companies on a silver reel-to-reel, not a cassette. There was interest from Warner Bros, A&M Records and Columbia. After a bidding war, Prince signed to Warners, attracted by their growing roster of black acts such as Funkadelic, Rose Royce and Curtis Mayfield. At the same time, Prince was keen to not present himself solely as a black artist. He didn't want to be pigeonholed. "I'm not an R&B artist," he told the record company. "I'm not a rock'n'roller. I'm an artist and I do a wide range of music. If I deliver you rock'n'roll, don't come back to me and say I can't do it because I'm black."

Lenny Waronker, then head of A&R at Warners, was delighted to have such a single-minded artist on



Prince successfully
overcomes his
shyness to perform
at the Roxy Theatre
on 26 November,
1979 in LA



Prince trades licks with guitarist Dez Dickerson, in his first public concert at the Capri Theater on 5 January, 1979 in Minneapolis

his books. "You could not only tell there was talent, but there was a vision," he said, recalling his new signee warning him, "Don't make me black."

Prince signed to Warners on 25 June, 1977, in a deal that gave him creative control and ownership of the publishing rights to his songs. It was two weeks after his 19th birthday. The stipulation was that he had to deliver three albums in 27 months, the first of them within six months of signing.

Husney and Prince decamped to Sausalito, California, where the first album, *For You*, was recorded at Record Plant Studios between October 1977 and February 1978. Veteran engineer Tommy Vicari was at the controls, with Prince assuming all other duties. According to the album notes, he produced, arranged and composed all the material (except *Soft And Wet*, whose lyrics were co-written by Chris Moon) and played all 27 instruments. Prince also met three of his heroes during recording: Sly Stone, Carlos Santana and Chaka Khan, who would later have a hit with one of his songs, *I Feel For You*.

The sessions didn't all go smoothly, however. Prince's legendary wilfulness and obduracy were already evident and he didn't like to be challenged on his often idiosyncratic working methods. Husney remembers Waronker and Warners head Mo Ostin coming up to the studio in Sausalito. "Prince didn't really want them up there," recalls Husney, "and I'm trying my best to keep them happy. We're listening to the playback of the track *So Blue*. Lenny goes, 'Great song, but there's no bass.' Prince turns around and says, 'That's it. Everybody out. Get out.' I turned white. I thought, 'It's all over.' We go shuffling out of the studio. Lenny said, 'Don't worry about it. The song is great. I get where he's coming from. I'm with him.'"

DAZZLING TECHNIQUE

The album was finished in February 1978. It cost \$170,000 to record, nearly the whole budget for Prince's first three albums. Prince was exhausted, but happy with the results. The album was mixed in Los Angeles and released on 7 April, 1978, to generally good reviews. Critics noted his breathy falsetto, drawing comparisons with Smokey Robinson, Michael Jackson and The Bee Gees. While many commented favourably on Prince's abilities, there was a sense that *For You* was a triumph of technique and polymathy over songcraft and melody.

Today, *For You*'s nine tracks seem strong and assured, offering a neat précis of 70s music styles. The album showed signs of the young prodigy's fearlessness and audacity from the *a cappella* opening track onwards. *For You* fared well commercially, selling 150,000 copies in the States and reaching No 21 on Billboard's soul chart, stalling at No 163 in the pop chart, which, considering his crossover ambitions, will doubtless have frustrated Prince. The first single, *Soft And Wet*, sold 350,000 in the US and reached No 12 on the soul chart and No 192 on the pop chart. The follow-up, *Just As Long As We're Together*, reached No 91 on the soul chart.

It was enough to generate media interest in the young musician, but the few face-to-face interviews Prince did made his bosses at Warners think twice about the benefits of doing press. Whether out of awkwardness or a desire to be different, he asked a female journalist from *Record World*: "Does your pubic hair go up to your navel?" It was then that it was decided that a no-interview policy might

Lover BOY

LIVE, VIDEO, ON RECORD (CONT'D)

I WANNA BE YOUR LOVER

WARNER BROS, AUGUST 1979

The urgent fever-pitch disco-funk of *I Wanna Be Your Lover* will have been many people's introduction to Prince. In a way, its lyric – "I wanna be your brother / I wanna be your mother and your sister, too / There ain't no other / That can do the things that I'll do to you" – foretells *If I Was Your Girlfriend* as Prince asserts his polymorphous desires. Clearly there was a market for such perverse impishness – the public softened up in this respect by disco androgynes such as Sylvester – and it became his first big hit in the US and the UK.



I WANNA BE YOUR LOVER (VIDEO)

WARNER BROS, AUGUST 1979

There are two videos accompanying this single. The main one features Prince in an unbuttoned leopard shirt and jeans singing alone against a black background, his lightly wavy hair a departure from his afro. Various shots show him playing the instruments by himself. The other version shows Prince and his band members performing the song in a painted room. The video was pulled due to its sexually suggestive nature, and remains sought-after by collectors.



LIVE AT THE ROXY THEATER, LA

NOVEMBER 1979

On 28 November, Prince and his band began a 14-date tour. Attended by a 500-strong crowd, it showed how far Prince and his players had come since the semi-debacle at Capri Theater. Reviews were generous, even if some were a little perplexed by the mix of funk and hard rock, suggesting it might alienate the largely black audience. How about funk, rock – and reggae? Prince met Bob Marley backstage, the idea being that the pair might record a track together. Unfortunately, the macho reggae superstar was put off by Prince's skimpy leopard g-string briefs and the collaboration was put on hold.



WHY YOU WANNA TREAT ME SO BAD?

WARNER BROS, JANUARY 1980

The squealing synth line was all the hook this single needed to sustain the chart success of its predecessor, *I Wanna Be Your Lover* (although that success was limited this time to the R&B chart, where it peaked at No 13). Critics who accused Prince of being a two-theme writer – his sexual voraciousness and the faithlessness of women – would have had their theory confirmed by this dig at a cruel lover, but the guitar solo at the climax was blistering.





Prince poses at the piano in his manager Owen Husney's home

© Robert Whitman/The Licensing Project

work better for Prince. Instead, it was going to be about recording and performing. All he needed was a band. Many musicians auditioned in LA, including Jimmy Jam, who was rejected, as was a guitarist who made a reference to drugs. Keyboardist Ricky Peterson turned Prince down because it seemed too much like boot camp ("They'd say, 'You can't drink; you have to show up on time...']"). But a strict regime was necessary because touring was essential to spreading the word about Prince and establishing his reputation.

Prince's plan was to have Warners organise a tour for 1979. He just needed to convince them he was worth the financial outlay. He assembled a band – André

Cymone on bass, Dez Dickerson on guitar, Gayle Chapman and Matt 'Doctor' Fink on keyboards, and David Z's brother Bobby on drums –

and Pepé Willie arranged for them to play two shows at Minneapolis's Capri Theater on 5 and 7 January.

Prince was nervous ahead of his live debut as a solo artist. "I'm terrified because it's gonna take a while to block out the fact that there are people out there," he told *Minneapolis Star* reporter Jon Bream.

The gig itself, in front of 300 fans, friends, and family members, was a mixed affair. DJ Kyle Ray of local radio station KUXL introduced Prince as "the next Stevie Wonder". To Jon Bream, at least, a star was born: Prince "strutted across the stage with grand Mick Jagger-like moves and gestures," said his review. "He was cool, he was cocky, and he was sexy. Prince's performance indicated he has extraordinary talent." But there were numerous technical hitches, and Prince cut a largely apprehensive figure, spending much of the show looking at his musicians, with his back to the audience. "Prince was real down on himself," said Dickerson later. "I remember us encouraging him, 'Put it behind you. We did fine.'"

"He was still developing what he was going to do

stage-wise," opined Matt Fink. "It went okay, but I don't think it went well enough for Warners to say, 'You guys are ready to go out on the road.'"

The band proceeded to "rehearse like crazy" for the next few months, while Prince did what he would spend the next three decades doing: he recorded another album. Prince's self-titled second album was completed in just seven weeks between April and June 1979, at Alpha Studios in Burbank, California. It was an exercise in monomania. "Produced, Arranged, Composed And Performed By Prince", declared the credits, with occasional assistance only from "Heaven-Sent Helpers" Cymone and Bobby Z.

Costing just \$35,000, it had the accomplished,

sophisticated feel of its predecessor, but the material was stronger and more diverse. It contained four singles; one of which, *I Wanna Be Your Lover*,

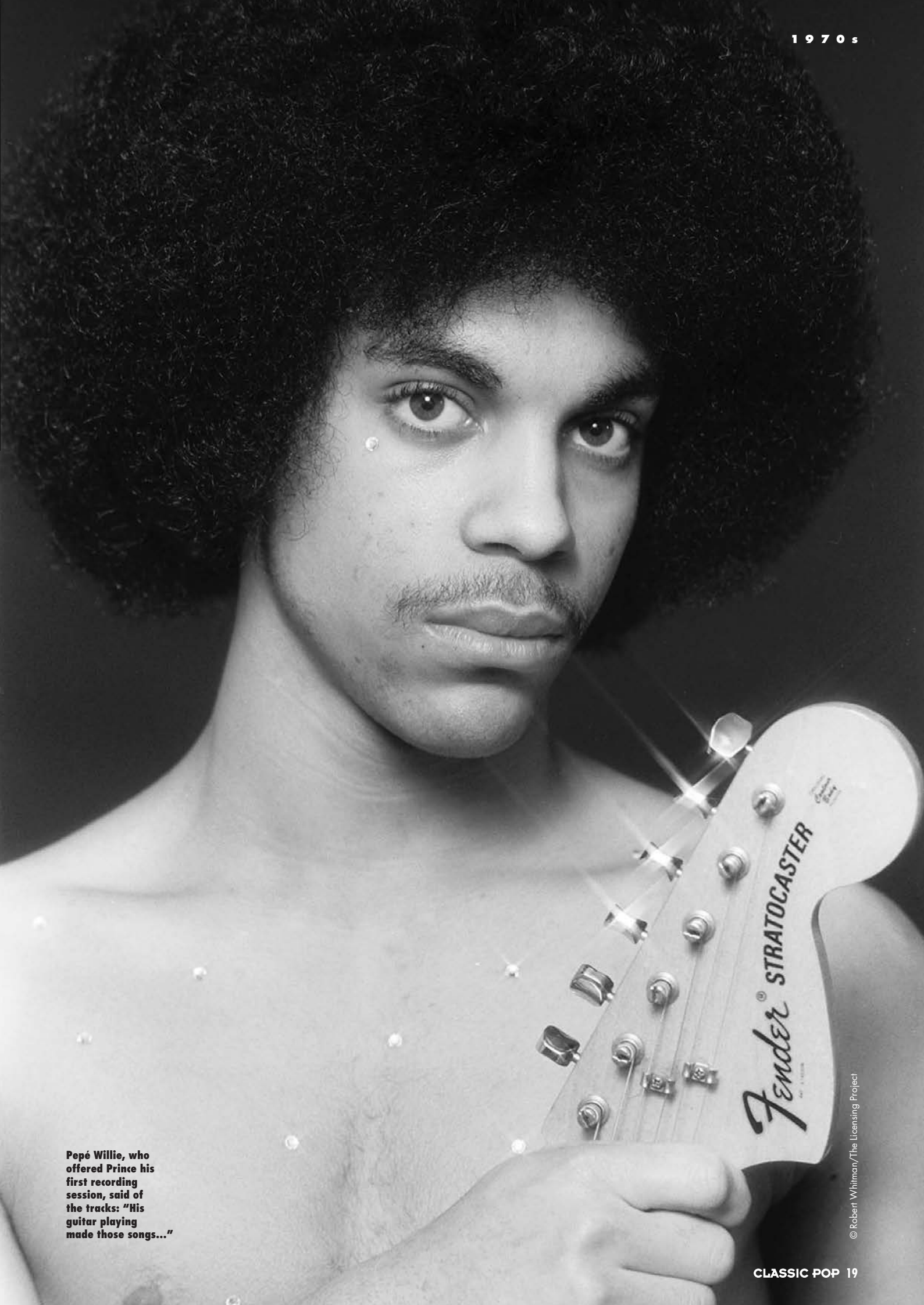
PRINCE "strutted across the stage WITH GRAND MICK JAGGER-LIKE MOVES AND GESTURES," SAID A REVIEW OF HIS LIVE DEBUT

became something of a calling card, selling a million copies and peaking at No 11 on the Billboard Hot 100 (it was also a later global hit for Chaka Khan in *I Feel For You*).

Released in October 1979, *Prince* reached No 22 on the Billboard 200 and went platinum. It also earned great reviews. "*Prince* teems with hooks that echo everyone from The Temptations to Jimi Hendrix to Todd Rundgren," raved Stephen Holden of *Rolling Stone*. To reinforce his burgeoning reputation, Prince also finally cracked the live thing: summer 1979's showcase for media and Warners staff at Leeds Instrument Rentals in LA evinced a band, according to Bobby Z, "a hundred times tighter" and a Prince "a hundred times more confident" than the one who appeared at the Capri Theater earlier in the year. Watching Prince strut, sashay and prowls the stage, as cheeky and charismatic as you could want; the unanimous view among the assembled was that they were witnessing the birth of someone and something really special. ■

POP UP The LA Times' review of Prince's debut performance at The Roxy in 1979 recognised Prince's talent, but worried that the artist was attempting to straddle two disparate musical worlds





Pepé Willie, who offered Prince his first recording session, said of the tracks: "His guitar playing made those songs..."

PART 1

PRINCE UNDER THE COVERS

WHEN A NEW TALENT ADDS THEIR OWN TWIST TO A CLASSIC PRINCE TUNE, MAGICAL THINGS SOMETIMES HAPPEN...

MARK LINDORES

He may have been known as pop's ultimate showman, famed for his electrifying live performances, virtuoso guitar playing and over-the-top theatrics, but behind it all, Prince was one of pop's most prolific songwriters, penning hits for peers, protégés and paramours. Here, we present our top 20 picks of Prince-penned pop, including duets, cover versions and collaborations.

Prince hid behind a host of monikers throughout the years – the most notable being his mid-90s name change to an unpronounceable symbol, which garnered him no shortage of attention, not to mention ridicule (as well as The Artist Formerly Known as Prince, he was referred to as 'TAFKAP' and 'Squiggle' during this time). Some of Prince's other pseudonyms include Jamie Starr, Christopher, Alexander Nevermind and Joey Coco.

"I was tired of seeing my name everywhere," he told *Bass Player* magazine in 1999, explaining his nominal disguises. "If you give away an idea, you still own that idea. In fact, giving it away strengthens it. Why do people feel they have to take credit for everything they do? Ego – that's the only reason."

Whether he gifted his songs to other artists or crafted them especially, Prince's main objective was always getting his music heard. As well as the global hits we know and love, Prince's varied credits include writing for his heroes George Clinton, Larry Graham and Mavis Staples, under-the-radar side-projects such as Madhouse and offering a helping hand to wannabes including Vanity, Apollonia, Carmen Electra and Mayte. Maybe writing under a different name wasn't always such a bad idea...

20 NONA GAYE AND THE ARTIST FORMERLY KNOWN AS PRINCE LOVE SIGN

1994

Prince had met Nona Gaye a year before this song was released, just after her debut album came out. He offered to write and produce its follow-up. "He brought me over to the studio and said, 'Listen to this.' I was like, 'That's amazing, I love it.' And he said, 'Well, go sing on it.' So we did a duet," she recalled. Their 1994 duet *Love Sign* had a strong anti-violence message and a video directed by rapper Ice Cube. Credited to Nona Gaye and Prince's symbol alias, the song was included on *1-800 NEW FUNK*, a compilation album of the artists on Prince's NPG label. Prince and Nona ended their romance shortly after *Love Sign*, after he met Mayte Garcia, a dancer who became his first wife. The relationship ended acrimoniously and plans for Nona's second album were shelved. *Love Sign* was later remixed for inclusion on the *Crystal Ball* CD set.



19 ROBYN JACK U OFF

2005

Disillusioned with the fame she had found as a teen pop star in the US in the late-90s, with hits such as *Show Me Love* and *Do You Know What It Takes*, Robyn returned to her native Sweden to make music that was authentic to herself and her influences. "When I was growing up, the three artists I used to listen to all the time were Michael Jackson, Kate Bush and Prince," she said. With the release of her self-titled album in 2005, she wanted to include a cover of a Prince song to acknowledge his influence. The problem was, which one? "I chose *Jack U Off* from the *Controversy* album – it's a great song because it's unpretentious and it's funny when he's doing his rockabilly thing. People think Prince is weird, but he's not. He's very on-point with people's inner relationships. I think that's his genius." Robyn also performed an inspired electro version of *When Doves Cry* during a radio session in 2010, introducing it as "one of my favourite ever songs".



18 JILL JONES MIA BOCCA

1987

A long-time member of the Prince family, Jill met Prince in 1980 when she was a backup singer for R&B star Teena Marie, Prince's support act on the *Dirty Mind* Tour. The pair hit it off, dated for a while and Jill provided backing vocals on the 1999 album and tour, appeared in the *Purple Rain* film and sang on Prince side projects *Apollonia 6* and *Vanity 6*. Jill released her self-titled debut album, co-written and produced by Prince, in 1987. *Mia Bocca* (Italian for 'my mouth') was released as the first single. It flopped in America, but was a moderate hit across Europe, thanks in part to the heavy MTV airplay the stunning Jean Baptiste Mondino-directed video received. Jill appeared in *Graffiti Bridge* in 1990, but things with Prince turned sour after that – Jill felt that she was way down Prince's list of priorities and given sub-par material. Her planned second album was never released and Prince refused to release her from her contract, forcing her into exile from recording.



17 THE TIME JUNGLE LOVE

1984

It wasn't just Prince whose fame skyrocketed after *Purple Rain*. Following the global success of the film, The Time enjoyed their greatest success with *Jungle Love* after it was featured in a performance scene at First Avenue. Singer Morris Day's history with Prince dates back to high school, when they performed together in Grand Central. Prince's record contract stated that he could sign and produce artists for the label, and Morris Day was his first signing, as the leader of a new funk band called The Time. Despite the name, The Time's records were solely Prince and Morris in the studio, with Morris on vocals and drums and Prince doing everything else (under the pseudonym Jamie Starr). A full band was assembled for live shows, and The Time supported Prince on tour; however, rows over payment and lack of input on their records caused rifts and line-up changes within the group. The *Purple Rain* film mirrored the rivalry that existed between The Time and The Revolution.



16 D'ANGELO SHE'S ALWAYS IN MY HAIR

1997

Released in 1985 as the B-side to *Raspberry Beret*, *She's Always In My Hair* was originally penned by Prince about his then-girlfriend Jill Jones in 1983. A self-obsessed Prince aficionado, D'Angelo jumped at the chance to cover one of his favourite songs for the soundtrack to *Scream 2* in 1997, transforming the blistering rock track into a smooth R&B jam. "I was five years old. *I Wanna Be Your Lover* had come out, and it was a big hit," D'Angelo says of the moment he discovered Prince. "When that album came out, it was just huge. He was the talk of the town. Everybody was wondering, 'Who is this guy? Is he a guy? Is it a girl?' No one really knew who it was. I remember we had the album, and my brothers were enamoured by him. They told me: 'He plays everything, he writes everything, he's singing everything.' I was hooked from then on. I learned how to play every song on that album, note for note, at five years old."



15 APOLLONIA 6 SEX SHOOTER

1984

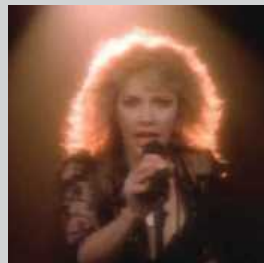
Apollonia 6 came into being following the 11th-hour departure of Vanity from both the *Purple Rain* film and Prince's girl group, Vanity 6. A frantic casting call was arranged to find her replacement, and the final auditionee was Patty Apollonia Koteri, who landed the role as Prince's on-screen love interest. As well as her role in the film, she took on lead singing duties in the now-renamed Apollonia 6, despite her limited vocal abilities and not wanting to pursue a career in music. The group lasted for one album; *Sex Shooter* was their biggest hit after it was featured in *Purple Rain*. "What I set out to be, and consider myself first and foremost, is an actor", says Apollonia. "When I auditioned for and was cast for *Purple Rain*, the role required me to sing and dance. So as an actor, I portrayed that character based on the script. I don't consider myself as a vocalist or a dancer. I like to dance, but my whole thing is that I'm an actor."



14 STEVIE NICKS STAND BACK

1983

Although he's not credited as a writer or a producer on *Stand Back*, Stevie Nicks maintains her 1983 hit "belongs to Prince", such was his influence. "I wrote *Stand Back* on my wedding day, riding along in the car, the first time I heard *Little Red Corvette*," she told *Rolling Stone* magazine. "I had these words in my head, and I just started singing with a friend of mine. And I said, 'You know, we need to pull over and get a tape recorder because I need to record this.' So I did, on a little tape recorder, and I phoned Prince out of the blue, hummed a melody, and he listened. I hung up. He was there in 20 minutes and he played all the organ parts and several things that I don't even really remember, but he played a lot on it. And he owns 50 per cent of the song. We became really good friends from that moment onward. He spoiled me for every band I've ever had, because nobody can do what Prince did all by his little self."



13 MARIAH CAREY FEAT. DRU HILL THE BEAUTIFUL ONES

1997

It takes a brave person to cover one of Prince's greatest ballads, but Mariah Carey did just that when she teamed up with R&B group Dru Hill to record *The Beautiful Ones* for her *Butterfly* album. Having recently separated from Sony Records boss Tommy Mottola, the album signalled Mariah's move from being forced to record what she called "drab", to recording music she loved. The album was mainly influenced by hip-hop; the R&B reworking of the Prince song was a tribute to the man who had become a friend as well as an artist she admired. Carey has never performed the song live; fans expected her to debut it during her recent tour after his death, but she declined. "I thought *One Sweet Day* was an appropriate tribute," she explained. "One thing about him that made me laugh is that he didn't like when people did his songs, otherwise I would have done something of his, but I knew that wasn't his thing."

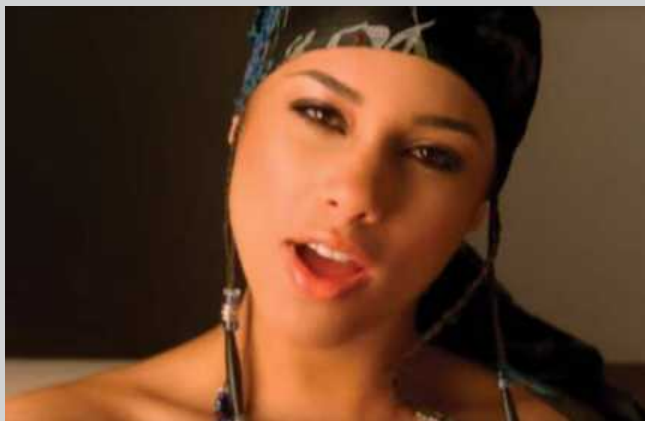


12 ALICIA KEYS

HOW COME YOU DON'T CALL ME?

2001

Prince's sophisticated piano-led ballad, *How Come U Don't Call Me Anymore?*, was originally recorded as the B-side to *1999* in 1982. Alicia Keys recorded a cover (retitled *How Come You Don't Call Me*) for her album *Songs In A Minor*, and the track was released as its third single. At the time, 19-year-old Keys was heralded as the next 'real' artist on the music scene, lauded for writing, producing, singing and playing on her records – just as Prince had at that age. Perhaps seeing something of himself in her, Prince took on the role of mentor for the young star. The two became great friends, often performing together at impromptu gigs, and when Prince entered the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2004, it was Keys who inducted him. "There are many kings, but there is only one Prince," she said. "[He wrote] songs that made me look at songwriting as stories that are untold passions dying to be heard."



11 SHEILA E

THE GLAMOROUS LIFE

1984

Sheila Escovedo was already established as a successful percussionist, having played for the likes of Marvin Gaye, Diana Ross and Lionel Richie, when she released *Erotic City*, her first song with Prince and the B-side to *Let's Go Crazy*. Afterwards, Prince changed her name to Sheila E and began writing songs for her debut album, *The Glamorous Life*. The title track had originally been written for Vanity 6; Prince had been waiting for someone else to do the song justice. It became a huge hit in the US, where Sheila was supporting Prince on the *Purple Rain* Tour (they got engaged after he proposed during a show). The song languished at No. 76 in the UK, but achieved more recognition after the follow-up, *The Belle Of St Mark*, was a Top 20 hit. Sheila released two more albums in the 80s with contributions from Prince, before putting her solo career on hiatus to play drums for him throughout the *Sign O' The Times* and *Lovesexy* eras.



Turn to page 58 for **PART 2**



EARLY 1980s

Baby I'm a Star

PRINCE STORMED INTO THE 80S
AMIDST A SMASHING TOGETHER
OF GENRES, RESULTING
IN A BLOCKBUSTER FILM,
HIT-SINGLES GALORE
AND NO SHORTAGE
OF CONTROVERSY

PAUL LESTER

Blurring the lines between
"rock and funk, the sexual
and the spiritual" on the
Dirty Mind Tour in New
York in March 1981



Prince

began 1980 with his first appearances on American TV, a sure sign of his increasing celebrity. These weren't just any TV appearances, though; they were on the nation's most important music shows. The first was *The Midnight Special* on 11 January, where he and his band played *I Wanna Be Your Lover* and *Why You Wanna Treat Me So Bad?*, and the second was *American Bandstand*, hosted by Dick Clark, on 26 January.

The latter appearance was either an auspicious start to his second decade as a recording artist, or a crushing disappointment, depending on your viewpoint. Either way, it was certainly memorable. Prince cavorted coquettishly in an open shirt and gold lamé pants during the musical segment of the show, when – flanked by his multi-racial, exotically attired musicians – he lip-synced his way through the same two songs he'd played on *The Midnight Special*. But he was disconcertingly monosyllabic when Clark attempted to engage him in conversation.

When the affable host asked how long he had been a musician, Prince didn't reply, he just held up four fingers. The 21-year-old proceeded to lie that he was only 19, and told Clark he'd turned down numerous major-label record deals because "they wouldn't let me produce myself". Then, when asked how many instruments he played, Prince gazed at the floor, before grimacing and replying: "Thousands".

Was it shyness, or did he sense a chance to enhance his growing renown by giving the chummy, slick presenter some good ol' punk attitude? According to Dez Dickerson, it was a stunt. He claimed Prince had told his crew that he intended not to reply if Clark asked him any questions, and that he'd urged Dez to do the same. "My heart sank," recalls the guitarist.

Missed opportunity or impressive coup? In the end, for Dickerson and other observers, it was the latter.

"It ended up being considered pure genius," he said. "And Dick Clark talks about it to this day."

RENEGADE OF FUNK

If Prince – hailed by Manhattan's *Soho Weekly News* as "a rock dilettante" – was infected by the punk virus, there was even greater chance of contagion when he and his band (now including Lisa Coleman on keyboards) became the opening act for godfather of punk-funk Rick James on 42 dates of his *Fire It Up* Tour throughout February and March 1980.

James was said to have been upstaged by the young pretender at more than one show, which must have stung considering his famously low opinion of the Minnesota singer. "You can't take his music seriously," he railed. "He sings songs about oral sex and incest." One can only imagine James' reaction, then, when

he became aware of the audiences' rapturous response to the young challenger. "We started to kick Rick's butt," proclaimed Bobby Z, who described it as

PRINCE CAVORTED COQUETTISHLY IN AN OPEN SHIRT AND GOLD LAMÉ PANTS FLANKED BY HIS MULTI-RACIAL, EXOTICALLY ATTIRED MUSICIANS

"a traditional showbusiness-type rivalry".

Off the stage, Prince and co largely kept their distance while James and his crew indulged in alcohol and narcotics. He had other things on his mind. Particularly – considering it had been all of nine months since the last one – recording another album.

This one had to count. It had been less than a year since the notorious *Disco Demolition Night* at Comiskey Park in Chicago, Illinois, where a crate filled with disco records was blown up by the organiser, disco-loathing rock fan and DJ Steve Dahl. This event signalled a shift in American radio programming and caused a downturn in disco's popularity ('disco sucks' became a popular catchphrase). R&B and associated genres felt the backlash, and Prince was aware of this, especially as a native of the largely white Minneapolis.

And so, as a savvy operator at the start of the 80s, to avoid the misery of musical apartheid, he

POP UP Rick James famously loathed Prince, saying "I can't believe people are gullible enough to buy his live records", and calling him "a little science-fiction creep" and "a mentally disturbed young man."





Prince shows off one of his more minimal stage outfits. Detroit, December 1980

Comparisons to Hendrix were frequent early in Prince's career. He didn't see them, claiming: "He plays different guitar than I do"



decided to record an album that would give him a fighting chance of inclusion on pop-radio playlists while appealing to the burgeoning new-wave market – Prince was a regular attendee and an on-stage fixture at First Avenue, the downtown Minneapolis club that regularly showcased new wave and independent artists.

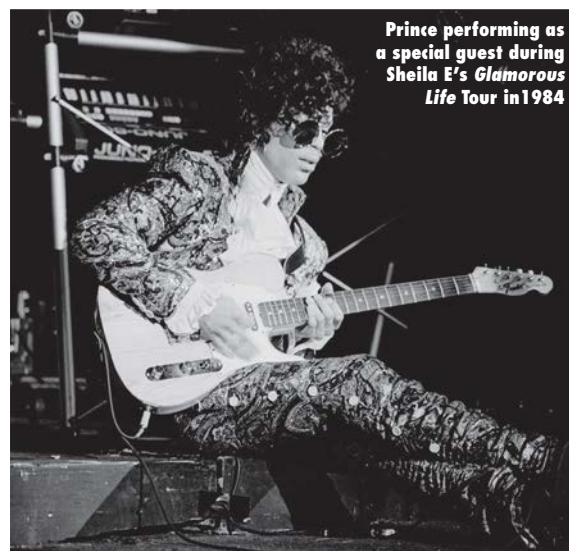
DIRTY UP YOUR MIND

The result of all this thought was *Dirty Mind*. It was recorded primarily in Prince's home studio in 1980, and several of the songs were cut in one night, hence the urgent, spontaneous, pared-down quality of the recordings. As per the first two albums, these songs were predominantly down to Prince alone in the studio, although other band members helped formulate parts of songs. The finished product was effectively a DIY demo tape.

The music wasn't all the result of impromptu sessions, however. The most 'new wave' of the songs, *When You Were Mine* – whose organ sound drew comparisons with Blondie and Elvis Costello & The Attractions – was written during the Rick James tour, while *Head* was demoed back in 1979. Both songs, however, were typical of Prince's latest approach and represented where his head was at now, three years into his career, and how he was feeling, which can perhaps be best summed up in one word: liberated.

"It was a revelation recording *Dirty Mind*," Prince said in an interview at the time. "I realised I could just write what was on my mind and didn't have to hide anything. When you talk about f**king and blowjobs, you cannot constantly hedge on it. You wind up talking crap." His intention, he decided, was to expose what he saw as "hypocrisy". "I say out loud what no man or woman dares to say, but is thinking about," he declared.

This might explain the explicit odes to oral sex (*Head*) and incest (*Sister*) on *Dirty Mind*. But in a way, *When You Were Mine*, ostensibly the crossover hit on the album, was the track that best captured Prince's intention to unleash his id and be positioned outside the space occupied by the macho R&B loverman. "I let you fool around / I never cared (didn't care) / I never was the kind to make a fuss / When he was there / Sleeping inbetween the two of us." This allusion to bisexuality suggested Prince was a Stateside analogue of UK gender-benders of the time such as Boy George and Marilyn. But the "sleeping inbetween" part also hinted at a philosophy of dualism that would mark his



Prince performing as a special guest during Sheila E's *Glamorous Life* Tour in 1984



The *Dirty Mind* Tour and album showcased an artist on the way to great success

career as he straddled the line between black and white, rock and funk, the sexual and spiritual.

That said, the front cover of *Dirty Mind* wasn't very sacred. It featured Prince staring at the camera, daring the observer to be appalled by his get-up: open jacket with a handkerchief around his neck, revealing a pair of skimpy black briefs. The rear caught him lying down beside a wall graffiti'd with the titles of the songs on *Dirty Mind*, wearing the same outfit, only this time showing his legs and a pair of thigh-high stockings.

It certainly got the album noticed, and showed that Prince was no late-70s wonder. Released on 8 October 1980, *Dirty Mind* debuted at No. 63 on the US Billboard 200 chart, peaking at No. 45. It earned widespread acclaim from music critics, despite the overall impression from keyboardist Matt 'Dr' Fink that "the fans weren't quite ready for it. It was R&B, new wave, punk, funk and rock, all mishmashed together. It was so innovative and different, it threw people for a loop."

Some said the post-disco hybrid of new-wave pop, rock and funk and salacious lyrics evinced on *Dirty Mind* represented one of the most radical volte-faces in pop. "The greatest masterpiece of calculated lechery ever committed to vinyl", said NME's Barney Hoskyns, later the author of *Prince: Imp Of The Perverse*, which is possibly overstating it – there was a lubricious element to those first two Prince albums, too.

Still, Ken Tucker of *Rolling Stone* agreed: "Prince's first two collections established him as a doe-eyed romantic. Nothing could have prepared us for the liberating lewdness of *Dirty Mind*. *Dirty Mind* jolts with the unsettling tension that arises from rubbing complex erotic wordplay against clean, simple melodies. Across this electric surface glides Prince's graceful quaver, tossing off lyrics with an exhilarating breathlessness. He takes the sweet romanticism of Smokey Robinson and combines it with the powerful vulgate poetry of

Richard Pryor. The result is cool music dealing with hot emotions. At its best, *Dirty Mind* is positively filthy."

The album was soon certified Gold, while the single *Uptown*, which addressed racial prejudice, reached No. 5 on the Billboard Dance chart and No. 5 on the Hot Soul Singles chart. And although the follow-up single, the album's title track, reached only No. 65 on the soul chart, there was a sense of an artist on an upwards trajectory. And he'd done it with his least compromising recording to date.

CONTROVERSY SURROUNDS

On 21 February 1981, Prince made a crucial appearance on *Saturday Night Live*, performing a version of anti-war rallying cry *Partyup* with his band. His idol, Todd Rundgren, by coincidence, was also a guest on that episode. Rundgren remembers the

occasion well, if only because he and Prince somehow found themselves competing in the shocking get-up stakes.

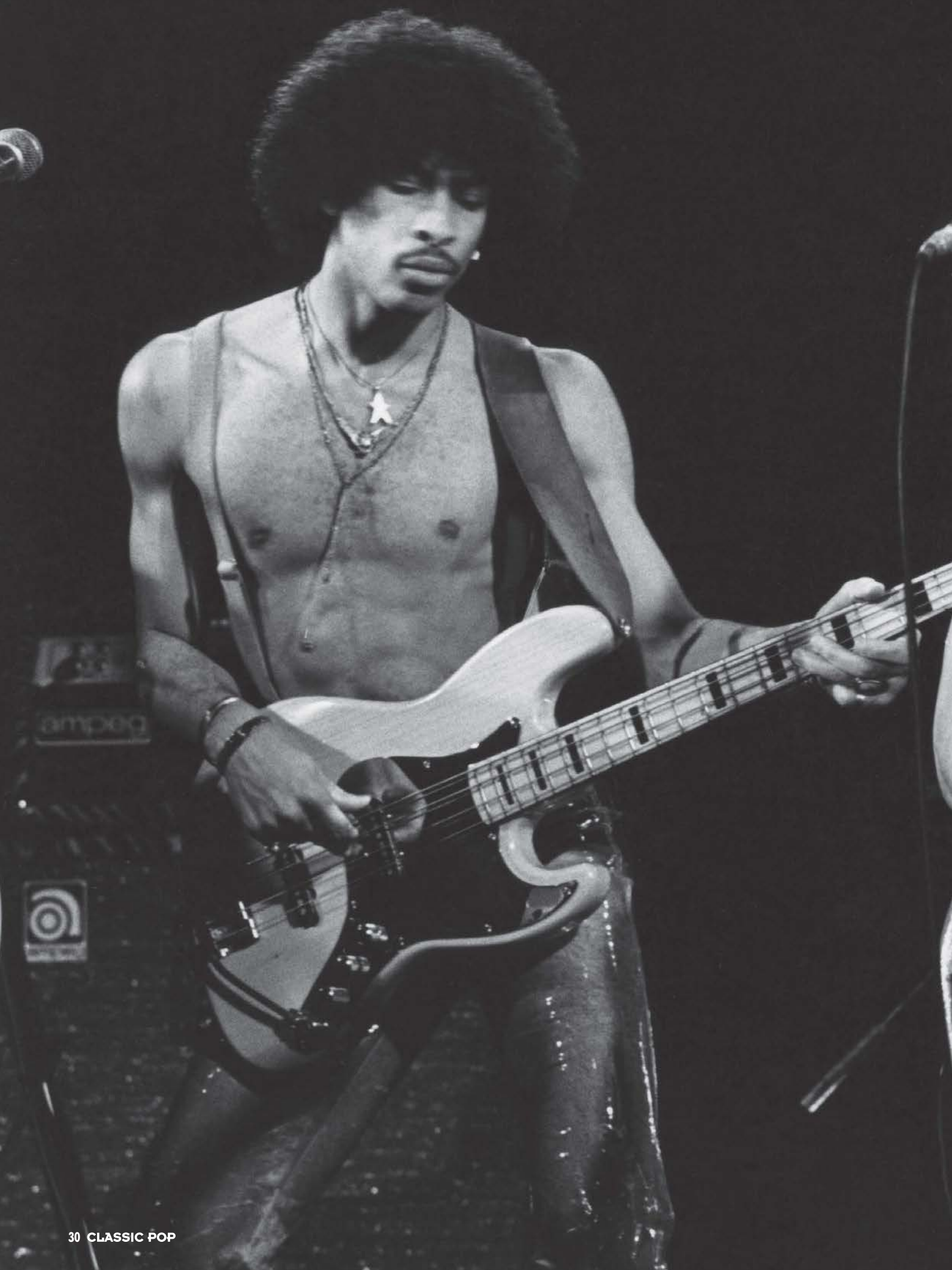
"I was wearing a slightly racy costume in which my, er, package was prominently displayed," Rundgren told this writer in 2013. "And there were some complaints. Then he came on for his first national TV appearance and he wore a pair of tidy whitey underpants and a big cape. So no matter what anyone had to say about my costume, it became all about Prince in his underwear."

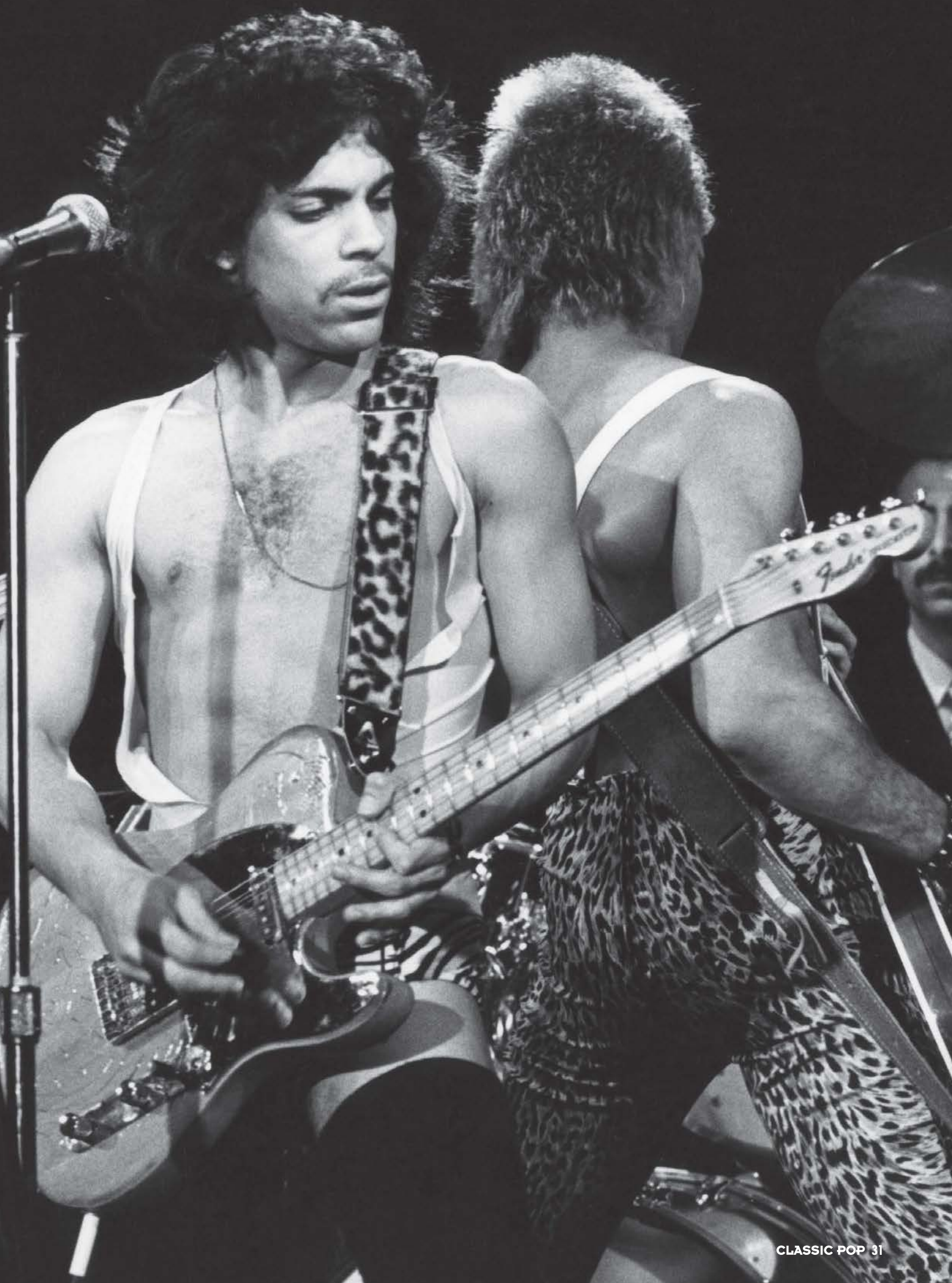
With all this controversy surrounding Prince, it probably figured that he would eventually use that noun as an album title. *Controversy* was recorded in summer 1981, with sessions taking place at Hollywood Sound Recorders and Sunset Sound, both in LA. Some songs were recorded at Prince's home studio on the outskirts of Minneapolis. The album was released in October 1981, and although its mash-up of rock and funk, languid ballads and libidinous workouts saw it voted No. 8 in the prestigious *Village Voice* end of year Pazz & Jop critics awards, these days, it is

"NOTHING COULD HAVE PREPARED US FOR THE LIBERATING LEWDNESS OF *DIRTY MIND*. THIS IS COOL MUSIC DEALING WITH HOT EMOTIONS"

POP_UP Cyndi Lauper covered *When You Were Mine* from *Dirty Mind* for her *She's So Unusual* album, a sign that Prince's influence had infiltrated diverse markets







Hit Parade

KEY ALBUMS, SINGLES AND VIDEOS **EARLY 1980s**

(Excluding *Purple Rain*, see special feature on p38)

DIRTY MIND

OCTOBER 1980

You could tell from the titles — *Head*, *Do It All Night*, *Partyup* — that *Dirty Mind* was never going to be Prince's religious album. Closer inspection of the lyrics — particularly the part where he ejaculates on the bride-to-be's wedding gown on *Head* and the bit in *Sister* where he announces, "Incest is everything it's said to be" — confirmed that Prince was the newly crowned king of lascivious party funk. But not just funk: *Dirty Mind* also drew on new wave (*When You Were Mine*, the title cut) while nodding to his R&B roots throughout. It was a triumph of cross-pollination.



CONTROVERSY

OCTOBER 1981

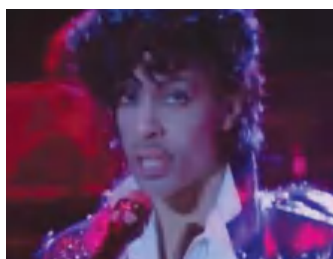
Here was another album unlikely to top Tipper Gore's birthday wishlist. It opened with the title track ("Listen, people call me rude / I wish we all were nude") and proceeded with *Sexuality*, whose lyrics proposed freedom through copulation. There followed *Do Me, Baby* ("Give it to me till I just can't take no more") and *Private Joy*, with its reference to the orgasmatron (Woody Allen's favourite device in the movie *Sleeper*), and the album climaxed with *Jack U Off*. In between were songs about everything from the Cold War (*Ronnie*, *Talk To Russia*) to ABSCAM (*Annie Christian*). You could say a lot about Prince during this time, but not that his subject matter wasn't varied!



LITTLE RED CORVETTE VIDEO

FEBRUARY 1983

Bryan Greenberg has directed over 100 music videos, but it's the one he did for Prince that entered the history books — it was the second video by a black artist played in heavy rotation on MTV, after Michael Jackson's *Billie Jean*. It was also the one that introduced the public to Prince. The performance video cost a miniscule \$20,000. Greenberg recalls: "Prince had that big-time rock-star persona, even then." But he didn't anticipate that the video would endure. "Nobody ever thought when we finished it, 'Oh my God, we just did something that will live on forever'."



WHEN DOVES CRY VIDEO

JUNE 1984

The video to Prince's first No. 1 single was directed by Prince himself. It opened with white doves emerging from double doors to reveal Prince in a weird, smoky bathtub. This was interspersed with various scenes from the *Purple Rain* movie together with shots of The Revolution performing and dancing in a white room and Prince in a sparkly gold suit and mauve fedora. The final section of the video incorporated a mirrored frame of the left half of the picture, so it looked as if Prince was dancing with himself. The video was nominated for Best Choreography at 1985's MTV Video Music Awards.



1999

OCTOBER 1982

The first song Prince wrote for this album was *All The Critics Love U In New York*, but despite the snarky tone, the title was spot-on: *1999* saw Prince become the most revered R&B star — soon to become the most revered rock star, period — in the Big Apple and beyond.

The album opened with *1999*, the No. 12 hit single, its lyric evidently informed by the "dance till the bomb drops" buzz-phrase that was popular in radical Britfunk circles circa 1981. The weird alien voice at the start reassured the listener: "Don't worry, I won't hurt you / I only want you to have some fun" before the song declares: "Everybody's got a bomb / We could all die any day / But before I'll let that happen / I'll dance my life away." And then there's that dreamy but powerful synth-chord pattern — something similar made an appearance in Phil Collins' later *Sussudio* (but Prince didn't suss-sue!). It's the story of Judgement Day. And guess how many plays it got in the run up to the millennium?

Next was *Little Red Corvette* — talk about front-loading an album with the hits! This song — with its Bryan Greenberg-directed video — remains one of the great car/girl songs since Chuck Berry (and Brian Wilson) patented the genre.

Top 10 hit *Delirious* could have been mashed up with The Pointer Sisters' *I'm So Excited*, released as a single the month before. This was one sex song that didn't need a Parental Advisory sticker ("Girl you gotta take me 4 a little ride up and down / In and out and around your lake," was as risqué as it got). *Let's Pretend We're Married*, on the other hand, certainly did. It gave lie to the theory that it was an update of the Beach Boys' *Wouldn't It Be Nice* as Prince declared: "I sincerely wanna f**k the taste out of your mouth." Still, its herky jerky new-wave pop had the geek-pop appeal of The Cars.

D.M.S.R. chimed with the electro-funk of The Dazz Band et al, its pristine electro-boogie also redolent of George Clinton's *Atomic Dog*. *Automatic* had early shades of *When Doves Cry* in its beat, while *Something In The Water (Does Not Compute)* sounded like Kraftwerk doing an R&B slow jam.

Free evinced Prince's libertarian philosophy. It was a good old-fashioned gospel-infused soul ballad, and could have been considered a dry run for the title track of *Purple Rain*. *Lady Cab Driver* was staccato funk combined with a quasi-rap that tapped into the street messages of Grandmaster Flash. Finally, *International Lover* showcased the purple lothario in boudoir mode.

The *1999* album caught Prince at his most experimental and most commercial. Keyboardist Matt Fink told *Rolling Stone* magazine: "I think he was trying to become as mainstream as possible, without violating his own philosophy and without having to compromise any of his ideas."



more likely to be summarised as a stop-gap between *Dirty Mind* and *1999*.

Still, it earned a place at No. 21 in the US Billboard 200 and was preceded by a single, the title track, which proved his most successful in the soul charts since *I Wanna Be Your Lover* in 1979. It also won Prince a support slot with The Rolling Stones on their US tour, where he predictably caused a furore in his trench coat and black bikini briefs. As soon as he appeared before the hostile 100,000-strong crowd at the LA Coliseum, homophobic slurs, food and bottles were hurled at him – ironic considering Mick Jagger virtually patented the idea of the strutting, preening rock androgyny. Prince was so upset he threatened to ditch the second date, but was talked back into it, only to experience the same miserable fate.

Ultimately, though, it was mere grist to Prince's mill, and if anything, it hardened his resolve to bend the US public to his will. "That audience brought stuff to throw," said a horrified Dickerson. "Someone threw a fifth of Jack Daniel's that barely missed Prince's head. A gallon jug of orange juice exploded on [new recruit] Mark [Brown]'s bass. I'd point at people and smile and wave. We got through the set. Going through that added to Prince's bravado."

NO REST FOR THE WICKED

In 1981, the restless, endlessly creative, some might say workaholic Prince formed a side project called The Time. They would release four albums between 1981 and 1990, with Prince writing and performing most of the instruments and backing vocals, sometimes credited under the pseudonyms Jamie Starr or The Starr Company, with lead vocals by Morris Day.

But everything that Prince had been doing since the late 70s was just teasing foreplay compared with the commercial consummation he would enjoy with *1999*, his first double album, released in October 1982. He had begun amassing material for what would be his breakthrough release back in March and April that year, mere months after the release of *Controversy*. This included *D.M.S.R.*, *Something In The Water (Does Not Compute)*, *Free*, *Automatic* and *Delirious*. These songs didn't represent a radical departure from the last two albums, but they did evince an increased use of synthesisers, blueprinting the machine-funk sound that would be Prince's trademark throughout the 80s. In this sense, he wasn't so much at the vanguard as riding a wave: over in Britain, the likes of The Human League, Soft Cell, Visage, Ultravox, Depeche Mode, New Order and Gary Numan had been using synths to make interesting and experimental pop music since at least the turn of the decade. Prince was picking up on a trend, using the latest technology and concomitant new approach to rhythm and melody.

It was the boldness of the melodies on *1999* that helped the album become his first huge seller. There were only 11 tracks on the four-LP set, several of which were six-to-nine minutes long. At just over 70 minutes in total, *1999* could have been a single album with a little pruning. But making it a double served as a statement of Prince's productivity, and of his desire to be taken seriously. Double albums were rare in the area of R&B and dance; they were more normally the preserve of rock artists. But this was exactly his intention: to be regarded as a proper album artist.

1999 was the first of his albums to hint at the involvement of The Revolution, but it was Prince who was once again responsible for the lion's share



Prince dressed to frill on the TV show *Solid Gold* in 1983



On stage in Detroit Michigan in November 1984. By this time, Prince was hailed as "a serious artist"

of the duties, as it stated on the sleeve: "Produced, arranged, composed and performed by Prince". There was some assistance on vocals and instrumentation from Dez Dickerson, Jill Jones (Prince's protégée and sometime girlfriend), Lisa Coleman and Wendy Melvoin (the two later formed Wendy & Lisa).

The album's first two tracks – *1999* and *Little Red Corvette* – proved its big hitters. *1999* was the first single and remains one of the key tracks in Prince's enormous canon, to use an appropriately lewd euphemism. A song that made the apocalypse seem like fun, it initially peaked at No. 44 on the US Billboard Hot 100 but was later re-released and hit No. 12. Second single *Little Red Corvette* was an extended car/sex metaphor that peaked at No. 6 on the US Billboard Hot 100 and signalled Prince's rise to superstardom (both tracks were compiled on a double A-side in Britain, where it reached No. 2).

STEALING THE SHOW

It was these two songs, along with contemporaneous releases by Michael Jackson such as *Billie Jean* and *Beat It*, that served to demolish the unofficial colour bar on the new music-video channel, MTV. A third single, *Delirious*, also made the Top 10 in the States, although a fourth, the double-sided single *Let's Pretend We're Married/Irresistible Bitch*, managed only No. 52.

The album received ecstatic reviews on both sides of the Atlantic. Robert Christgau, the self-styled Dean Of Rock Critics, hailed Prince in New York's *Village Voice* as "a black pop auteur" and said that he "commands his own personal groove". He furthered: "By stretching his flat funk forcebeat onto two discs' worth of deeply useful dance tracks he makes his most convincing political statement to date – about race, the one subject where his instincts always serve him reliably." In Britain, Tony Mitchell of *Sounds*, who usually wrote about progressive-rock music, raved: "*1999* is Prince's best-rounded, most successful effort. He moves confidently and effectively back and forth between pulsing funk and artful pop."

In November 1982, Prince gave a rare interview to Robert Hilburn of the *Los Angeles Times*. In an article headed *The Renegade Prince*, the journalist ventured that Prince was "a serious artist who may become the biggest black star in rock since Sly Stone". He went on to place Prince alongside the likes of Elvis Presley, Bob Dylan, Sly and David Bowie as an example of a musician who "challenges listeners to examine their



Prince surrounded by security guards at Grosvenor House in London in 1983

The Purple Rain Tour lasted five months and marked the live debut of The Revolution

lives rather than accept what has been outlined for them". Prince worried to Hilburn that the eroticism in his music overshadowed its other elements, but refused to tone it down.

"Sex is something we can all understand," he said. "It's limitless. But I try to make the songs so they can be viewed in different ways." He pointed out that he wasn't gay, but added that "the most important thing is to be true to yourself," adding: "I like danger." He cited Presley and Hendrix as past masters of thrilling mystery and mayhem in rock, the implication being that he was their logical son and heir.

He was in danger of eclipsing even the all-time greats with his next release. But first, he outshone his closest rival in the realm of deracinated R&B, at a James Brown concert in Beverly Hills in 1983. Fans of the original funk-soul brother would have had no idea that their ticket to see him that night was going to include cameos from a pair of his godlike progeny.

Casually sitting there in the audience were Prince and Michael Jackson, both Brown devotees. Brown spotted Jackson first and invited him to come on stage "and say something". Looking resplendent in a purple jacket, Jackson proceeded to sing and dance and execute a partial moonwalk, after which he whispered in Brown's ear to bring Prince on stage as well. Brown couldn't see the diminutive deity at first. Finally, he spied him and cackled as Prince mounted his bodyguard Chick Huntzberry's shoulders and piggybacked towards the stage, removing one of his gloves with his teeth and flinging it into the crowd.

Even in this exotic company, Prince looked outlandish. Once on stage, he strapped on a guitar and played a blistering solo before teasingly removing his jacket and indulging in some bare-chested moves, lunges and drops using the mic stand. He screamed into the mic and caressed his face, hair and body to the rapture of those assembled. There he was, with the

60s soul pioneer and the biggest entertainer of the late-20th century, yet the audience were yelling for him. As *Time* magazine put it: "Prince stole the show".

THE PURPLE REIGN BEGINS

Prince stole another show that summer, but this time it was his own show – well, his and new band The Revolution's. It didn't seem like much from the outside: a benefit concert for a financially beleaguered Minnesota Dance Theater company at Minneapolis' First Avenue club. But that show on 3 August, 1983 turned into one of Prince's most exciting concerts ever.

It was the first time anybody had heard the songs that would comprise the bulk of *Purple Rain*: *I Would Die 4 U*, *Computer Blue*, *Purple Rain*, *Let's Go Crazy* and *Baby I'm A Star*. Also played in the 70-minute set

were: *Delirious*, *Automatic*, *D.M.S.R.* and *Little Red Corvette* from 1999, plus *When You Were Mine* from *Dirty Mind*, a cover of Joni Mitchell's *A Case*

Of You and the still-unreleased *Electric Intercourse*.

Three of those *Purple Rain* tracks – *I Would Die 4 U*, *Baby I'm A Star* and the title cut – came direct from that First Avenue performance, recorded from a mobile truck outside the club, with overdubs and edits added later. The version of *Purple Rain* aired that night was 13 minutes long; the song was cut to eight for the LP. "My first reaction was, 'Wow, this is almost a country song'," remarked drummer Bobby Z. The audience listened intently to the epic rock ballad instead of, as would be their wont thereafter, singing along lustily. But then, when they'd never heard it before, it was history in the making.

The show also marked the first live appearance of Wendy Melvoin, who replaced Dez Dickerson on guitar ("I was scared to death but I loved it," she later admitted, describing it as her "make-or-break evening"). Thus, the lineup of The Revolution, the band that would feature prominently in the *Purple Rain*

HE STRAPPED ON A GUITAR, PLAYED A BLISTERING SOLO BEFORE TEASINGLY REMOVING HIS JACKET TO THE RAPTURE OF THOSE ASSEMBLED

POP UP Prince was compared to Jimi Hendrix early in his career. He rejected this comparison, telling *Rolling Stone* in 1985: "It's only because he's black."



Sheila E glances at her special guest, Prince, at a show at the Ritz during her 1984 *Glamorous Life Tour*



POP UP Prince was partly responsible for Parental Advisory stickers on albums; Tipper Gore formed the Parents Music Resource Center after witnessing her 11-year-old daughter listening to *Darling Nikki*



movie, was solidified. Footage of the concert reveals a sweaty venue, a pretty murky PA and Prince in his purple pomp.

1984 was a big year for blockbusters – Michael Jackson's *Thriller* was still selling two years after its original release, Madonna put out *Like A Virgin* and Bruce Springsteen gave the world *Born In The USA*. But among even these landmark long-players, Prince's sixth album stood out.

Purple Rain – recorded at various studios in Minnesota and LA and credited to Prince And The New Power Generation – was a feast of layered guitars, keyboards and drum machines, icy electronics and passionate vocals. It was the crossover to end all crossovers. Matt Fink recalls that during the 1999 Tour, Prince had been wondering aloud what made heartland rocker Bob Seger's music so popular. "Well, he's playing mainstream pop rock," Fink told him. "If you were to write something along these lines, it would cross things over for you even further." Job done. *Purple Rain* reached all over America, and then proceeded to spread its tentacles across the planet.

It was the first major realisation of Prince's all-encompassing vision, including as it did not only the album, but also a film – *Purple Rain* was the soundtrack to a movie that, loosely, charted Prince's journey up to this point. Described by Los Angeles critic Mikal Gilmore as "the best rock film ever made", it was the ultimate origin story, starring Prince as The Kid, a version of himself that barely needed exaggerating, because the real-world one already had all the alien charisma of a larger-than-life movie character.

The film exceeded all expectations at the box office, while the soundtrack – including the manic quasi-rockabilly of *Let's Go Crazy*, the bass-less wonder that was *When Doves Cry*, the XXX-rated *Darling Nikki*, the ecstatically mournful *I Would Die 4 U* and the arena guitar-gospel of the title track – catapulted Prince

into the super league. "With *Purple Rain*, Prince bursts forth from the ghetto created by mainstream radio and launches himself directly onto the Mt. Rushmore of American music," wrote Carvell Wallace of *Pitchfork*.

AND THE HITS KEPT COMING

The biggest of the big were suddenly enraptured by Prince. Bobby Z recalls a gig at the Forum in LA, where stars were queuing for the facilities along with regular punters. "Madonna knocks on the door and says, 'Can I use the bathroom?' Sure. Springsteen needed to use the bathroom, too. My dad was there. 'Dad, I'd like you to meet Bruce. Madonna, this is Harold Rivkin'. My dad didn't know who he was talking to."

Prince won two Grammy Awards in 1985 for *Purple Rain*, for Best Rock Vocal Performance By A Duo or Group and Best Album Of Original Score Written For A Motion Picture Or TV Special, while the album was nominated for Album Of The Year. Prince won a third

PURPLE RAIN EXCEEDED ALL EXPECTATIONS AT THE BOX OFFICE AND THE SOUNDTRACK CATAPULTED PRINCE INTO THE SUPER-LEAGUE

Grammy that year: Best R&B Song (songwriter) for Chaka Khan's cover of *I Feel For You*. *Purple Rain* also won an Oscar for Best Original Song Score in 1985. Meanwhile, what had been a budget \$7 million movie grossed over \$65 million.

As for the album, it shifted 13 million units in the US (it had sold more than 20 million by 2016) and spent 24 consecutive weeks at No. 1, from 4 August, 1984 to 18 January, 1985, becoming one of the biggest-selling soundtracks ever. It also bequeathed four US Top 10 singles: *When Doves Cry* and *Let's Go Crazy*, both of which reached No. 1, *Purple Rain* (No. 2) and *I Would Die 4 U* (No. 8). A fifth single, *Take Me With U*, peaked at No. 25, but it still became a Top 10 hit in the UK.

Turn to p44 for the rest of this feature on Prince's life during the 80s. Turn the page for a special Classic Album feature on *Purple Rain*. ■

California, 1985:
at the height of
Purple Rain mania

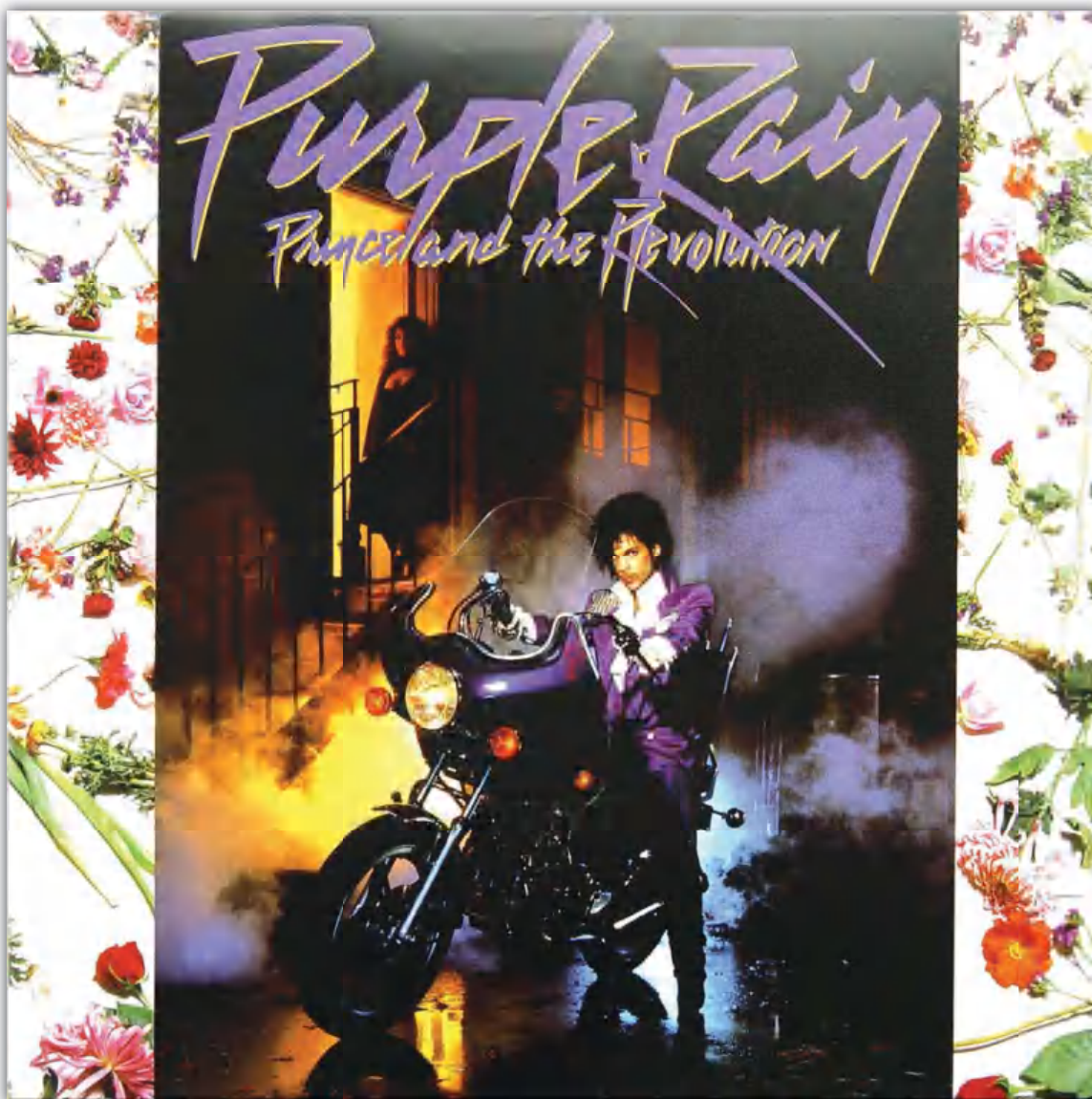


CLASSIC
ALBUM

PURPLE RAIN

PRINCE AND THE REVOLUTION

WHEN, FIVE ALBUMS INTO HIS CAREER, PRINCE SUGGESTED THAT HE WANTED TO MAKE A MOVIE, HIS LABEL SCOFFED. THREE DECADES ON, *PURPLE RAIN* IS WIDELY REGARDED AS THE MOMENT THE SINGER TRULY BECAME A GLOBAL ICON **MARK LINDORES**



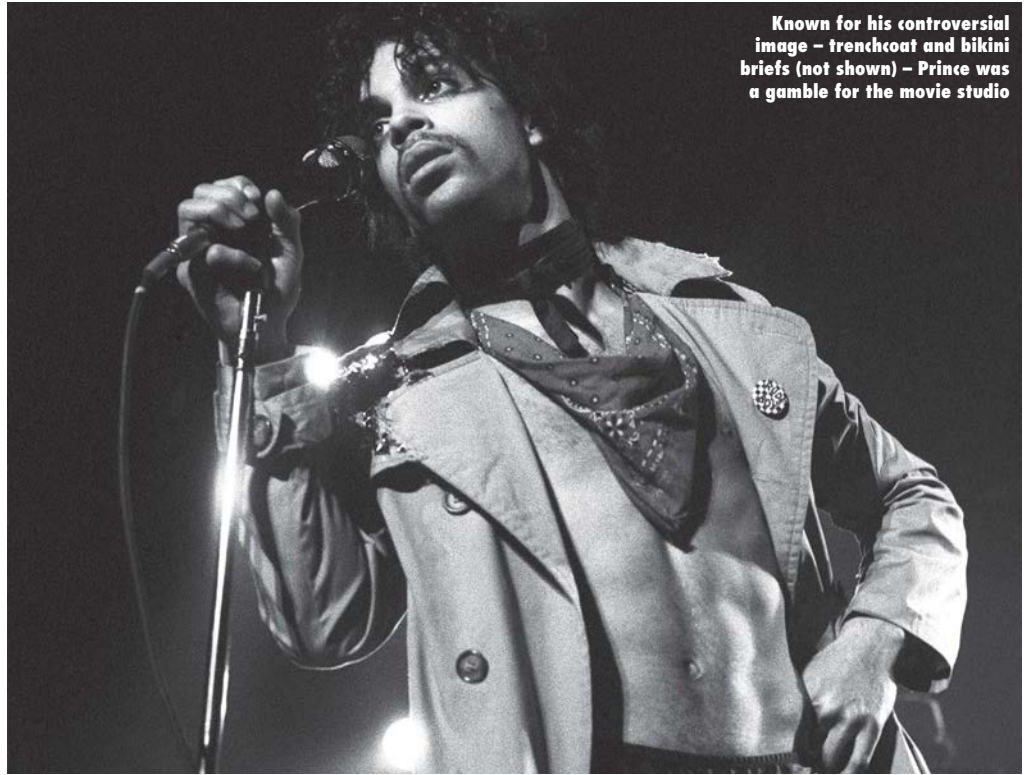
When Prince revealed that his stipulation for renewing

his record contract with Warner Bros in 1983 was a deal with a major studio to produce his feature-film debut, it was little wonder that they balked at the suggestion. After all, the artist formerly known as a sex-obsessed funketeer with a penchant for singing expletive-laden jams while wearing just bikini briefs and a trenchcoat was hardly a marketable commodity to mainstream America.

"Nobody thought that movie would ever get made," says Alan Leeds, Prince's former tour manager. "Most people in the music industry and much of the media were saying, 'Who is this singer, Prince, who thinks he's all that to make his own movie?' We all knew that this was either going to turn Prince into a major star or become one of the most embarrassing flops of all time. Despite the success of his recent *Controversy* and 1999 tours, most of the general public had yet to discover the legend-in-the-making that *Purple Rain* would reveal."

Since his arrival on the music scene with his debut album, *For You*, in 1978 (released when he was just 19 years old), Prince Rogers Nelson had been regarded as something of a maverick. Sex and religion were the predominant subject matter of his songs, all of which he'd written and performed alone, while his style and stage presence were drawing comparisons to Little Richard, Jimi Hendrix and Carlos Santana, among others. Critically acclaimed, his first four albums – *For You*, *Prince*, *Dirty Mind* and *Controversy* – had all been moderate successes and he'd toured extensively in support of them all, but Prince was still regarded as something of a niche artist within the industry, and an enigmatic one due to his disdain for giving interviews to the media.

That all began to change with the release of his fifth



Known for his controversial image – trenchcoat and bikini briefs (not shown) – Prince was a gamble for the movie studio

THE SONGS

1 LET'S GO CRAZY

The sermon-like, "Dearly beloved, we are gathered here today to get through this thing called life" gives way to a frenetic dance beat, reminiscent of *Delirious* from 1999, before a screaming guitar instructs the listener to "go crazy". The song's meaning has been heavily debated over the years, and Prince has said that due to radio restrictions on mentioning religion, he had to find other ways of relaying his message and this was one of those instances. The song gave him his second US number-one hit and was his staple concert opener since its release.

2 TAKE ME WITH U

Prince wrote this to the specification of *Purple Rain* director Albert Magnoli, who wanted a breezy, upbeat track to counteract the film's darker moments. It was recorded as a duet with Apollonia Kotero, Prince's on-screen love interest. While Kotero was great in the film, she wasn't a great singer, so Lisa Coleman was brought in to contribute to the track to even out the vocals.

3 THE BEAUTIFUL ONES

The Beautiful Ones was a late addition to *Purple Rain*, replacing a song called *Electric Intercourse*. Written and performed entirely by Prince, it was inspired by his feelings for Susannah Melvoin (his bandmate Wendy's twin sister). A haunting tale of unrequited love, the track is built on a simple drum machine and keyboard track. Prince's vocal delivery is what cements the emotional intensity. Almost whispering at the beginning, he's screaming by the time the song reaches its crescendo. It soundtracks a pivotal moment in the film, as Prince attempts to steal Apollonia from his rival, Morris Day.

4 COMPUTER BLUE

One of the most-asked questions about *Purple Rain* is: what is the meaning behind Lisa Coleman and Wendy Melvoin's "Is the water warm enough?" intro? "We had no idea," says Wendy. "Prince gave us a piece of paper and asked us to say it. We had no idea it had weird psychosexual connotations." Originally over 14 minutes long, the track was edited down to enable *Take Me With U* to fit on the album. Prince's father, John L. Nelson, is credited as co-writer on *Computer Blue*, as it incorporates *Father's Song*, a track he gave Prince to use in the film.

5 DARLING NIKKI

The most controversial track on the album, due to its opening line, "I knew a girl called Nikki / I guess you could say she was a sex fiend / I met her in a hotel lobby, masturbating with a magazine," *Darling Nikki* was singled out by Tipper Gore and the Parents Music Resource Center, and prompted the introduction of Parental Advisory/Explicit Content stickers for albums containing sexual or violent content. Another solo Prince composition, *Darling Nikki* has been covered by artists including Rihanna and Foo Fighters.

6 WHEN DOVES CRY

When Prince was recording *When Doves Cry*, the final track for the album, legend has it that he said to the sound engineer, "Nobody would have the balls to do this. People are going to freak." He was referring to the fact that the song had no bassline. The minimalist track is a complex story of the relationships Prince's character in *Purple Rain*, The Kid, has with his girlfriend and parents. One of those songs that shouldn't work, it still stands as one of Prince's greatest-ever releases.

7 I WOULD DIE 4 U

On first listen, *I Would Die 4 U* is a straight-up love song, with Prince declaring his feelings over shimmering synths and a dance beat. The opening line of, "I'm not a woman, I'm not a man, I'm something that you'll never understand" harks back to his *Controversy* era. But when investigated further, it's apparent that Prince is singing from the viewpoint of Jesus, and this was confirmed on the *Purple Rain* Tour, when he changed the lyric from, "I'm your messiah and you're the reason why" to "He's your messiah", while pointing skywards.

8 BABY I'M A STAR

Originally written in 1982 during the prolific 1999 sessions, *Baby I'm A Star* perfectly encapsulates the Prince live experience (it was recorded during his band's infamous First Avenue gig in August 1983). The prophetic lyrics, "Baby I'm A Star / Might not know it now, baby, but I am / I'm a star / I don't wanna stop 'til I reach the top," suggest that Prince was confident he was going to achieve huge success, and he kept the song back until he felt the time was right to release it.

9 PURPLE RAIN

The definition of the word 'epic', the album's title track was a soaring, anthemic rock ballad written by Prince with Wendy Melvoin, originally for Stevie Nicks. "Prince had the idea and the melody, then I added chords and a guitar part, and the rest was everyone else chipping in," says Melvoin. The nine-minute-long track provokes discussion to this day, with fans debating hidden meanings in the lyrics, revelling in the mysticism that Prince has threaded through the tapestry of his work for over 30 years.

album, 1999, in October 1982. It spawned a pair of smash hits on both sides of the Atlantic – the title track and *Little Red Corvette* – as well as a further Top 10 single in the US, *Delirious*. All three tracks garnered heavy rotation on the newly launched MTV, making Prince one of the first black artists to be supported by the channel (along with Michael Jackson). But while Jackson's big-budget affairs redefined the medium of music video, Prince used the format to highlight his talent as an exhilarating live performer.

Having broadened the demographic of his audience through his videos (by the time he embarked on the Triple Threat tour in support of 1999, his audience had changed from being largely black to multi-racial, male and female, and of varying age groups), the diminutive singer was already planning his transition from MTV to the silver screen.

Throughout the tour, Prince was in constant possession of a purple notebook. Although everyone presumed that the notoriously prolific star had already begun work on his next album, it was later revealed that the notebook was, in fact, his preparation for *Purple Rain* – not only writing music for the film, but also dreaming up script ideas.



Prince as 'The Kid' in *Purple Rain*. The movie grossed over \$75million at the box office

During the hot summer of 1983, a warehouse in St Louis Park, in Prince's home state of Minnesota, became the nucleus of the *Purple Rain* project. Those sessions saw both Prince And The Revolution and The Time (Prince's pop-funk side project, who he'd managed to get signed up to the Warner Bros label) working on the songs that would make it into the film, as well as attending acting and dance classes. During that time, Prince closely examined

the relationships within the two bands, so that he could accurately portray the band rivalry depicted in the film.

"It was definitely a case of art imitating life," says The Revolution's guitarist Wendy Melvoin. "It was so funny the first time we heard the voiceover on the trailer saying, 'Before Prince made the music, he lived it,' because that was so true."

While the rivalry between bands, seen in the movie, was indicative of the Minneapolis music scene at that time, the

tension within The Revolution was also accurate, and Prince's steely leadership had already led to the departures of his original guitarist Dez Dickerson and bassist André Cymone (another member, keyboard player Gayle Chapman, had left the band because the overt sexuality of the music and stage show conflicted with her religious beliefs).

They were quickly replaced, however, and with Brown Mark (bass), Bobby Z (drums), Matt Fink (keyboards), Lisa Coleman (keyboards) and Wendy Melvoin (guitar) on board, the definitive line-up of The Revolution was in place – a modern-day Sly And The Family Stone. With so much talent around him, *Purple Rain* became Prince's most collaborative album to date. While his previous songwriting and recording sessions had been insular affairs, the input of other musicians served only to enrich the sound of his music.

"Lisa and I were definitely instrumental in influencing him at that time," says Melvoin. "We were close to him and we became this triumvirate. We introduced him to a lot of ideas and different kinds of music. He relied on us to give him what he knew he didn't

THE PLAYERS



PRINCE

The singer was already five albums into his career when he started work on *Purple Rain*, but it was that album that turned him into a global phenomenon. He eventually sold over a hundred million records worldwide, but for many, *Purple Rain* became his career-defining project.



WENDY MELVOIN

Guitarist Melvoin joined the band as a replacement for Dez Dickerson. Her first gig in front of an audience as part of The Revolution was the First Avenue show that resulted in *Purple Rain*, *I Would Die 4 U* and *Baby I'm A Star* being recorded for the album. She continues to write and record music with Lisa Coleman as Wendy And Lisa.



LISA COLEMAN

Keyboard player Coleman replaced Gayle Chapman, who'd left the band because the sexual overtones of the music conflicted with her religious beliefs. Recruited in time to play on the *Dirty Mind* album, Coleman – like Melvoin – brought a wealth of talent and ideas to the table. She went on to form Wendy And Lisa with Melvoin, and the pair also won an Emmy for writing the theme to TV series *Nurse Jackie*.



MARK BROWN

Known as Brown Mark during his time as bass player in The Revolution, Mark Brown continued working in music after the group disbanded. As well as releasing a solo album, he worked with Sting, Stevie Wonder and Salt-n-Pepa.



BOBBY Z

Prince's drummer since the late-70s, Bobby Z left The Revolution in 1986 along with Melvoin and Coleman. He went on to work on their albums (as Wendy And Lisa), and also collaborated with Boy George and Alexander O'Neal, before setting up his own label and releasing solo material. He survived a massive heart attack in 2011.



MATT FINK

One of the longest-serving members of Prince's backing group, Matt 'Dr' Fink began working with the singer in 1979 and stayed with him throughout his 'imperial phase'. After parting with Prince, he opened a recording studio and has produced other artists, released solo material and written the soundtracks to video games.

Fiercely ambitious, Prince's leadership led to members of his band departing



have musically, and we were more than happy to give him everything we had."

"We were basically camped out in that warehouse with some 24-track machines, rehearsing and working out songs as a band," remembers Coleman. "We were so tight

the inception of the *Purple Rain* album. It was here that Prince chose to hold a series of impromptu gigs to try out the new material his band had been working on. Not since The Beatles had an artist been so synonymous with their hometown, with

"It was definitely a case of art imitating life. It was so funny the first time we heard the voiceover on the trailer saying, 'Before Prince made the music, he lived it,' because that was so true"

WENDY MELVOIN

at that time. Wendy came up with some amazing guitar lines and beautiful chords that were indicative of the whole album. We'd all just look at each other and know where things would happen instinctively. Bobby would come in with a cymbal, then Prince would guide us by saying, 'Let's try it this way; how about adding this?', and we'd just carve it out. Then we took it to First Avenue, and that gig was recorded and videotaped – that's where the majority of the album comes from."

Alongside the St Louis Park warehouse, First Avenue, a club in downtown Minneapolis, became the most-important location to

First Avenue serving as Minneapolis' Cavern Club.

As the film and album were being created simultaneously, Prince wanted the tracks to sound as authentic as possible. With this in mind, he arranged for them to be recorded live during a benefit concert for the Minnesota Dance Theatre, at First Avenue on 3 August, 1983. With the exception of a few overdubs, the epic version of *Purple Rain* we hear on the album, as well as *I Would Die 4 U* and *Baby I'm A Star*, are exactly how they were played that night. *Let's Go Crazy* and *Computer Blue* were also performed during the show, but were re-recorded as live in the warehouse for the album.



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

BOBBY Z

2014 INTERVIEW

Q You were a member of Prince's band for eight years. How did you first start working with him?

● I was a studio musician and Prince was hanging out at the studio. We did our first session together and I saw immediately that he was a very special, gifted musician. We immediately hit it off, became friends and decided to form a band. It was Prince, myself and André Cymone, and we auditioned other musicians to form our group.

Q Where did the idea of making the *Purple Rain* movie come from?

● Well, Prince had had the idea and been playing around with it for a while. At first, it was beyond belief to us, but we'd learned that whenever Prince mentioned something we thought was beyond belief, it would always materialise. So we put the work in – we went to dance classes and acting classes to get used to being comfortable in front of the camera. We put the time in.

Q Was being in the movie difficult in any way? It was a completely new experience for you...

● As the story came together, Prince prepped us really well to be actors. He had writers on the tourbus to get to know us and hang with us and see what we were about, and to write specifically for us. The performance scenes we shot were remarkable; the energy in the room was unbelievable.

Q How did your lives change after the release of *Purple Rain*?

● The film changed everything. I'm still known as a drummer today because I was in a movie and I had a few lines that people still remember and quote back at me. For a time, we weren't just a rock 'n' roll band, we became like movie stars. To this day, the difference between us and other bands that came through in the 80s is that we were featured in an Oscar-winning movie.

Q Which Prince song is your favourite to play?

● My favourite song to play with Prince is *Purple Rain*. It has that emotional feeling from the get-go, those opening chords. It had the feeling back then that it still has today – the emotion of when he plays those chords, the emotion with which he sings it. To have played drums on that song is an honour. I really feel that I got to be part of a standard.

With the film nearing completion, the studio was still nervous about how it was going to perform at the box office, so they asked Prince to write and record another track to release prior to the film – the idea being that they could issue an accompanying video showing clips of the film to generate interest. The singer returned the next day with *When Doves Cry*, a sparse dance track devoid of bass and consisting only of a drum machine, a keyboard, a guitar and multi-tracked vocals. One of his most experimental tracks to date, it was deemed too avant garde by his label, who wanted to pass on it, but Prince's perseverance that it was *Purple Rain*'s debut single paid off and it became his first US number-one hit. It stayed in pole position for five weeks, shifting two million copies and preventing Bruce Springsteen's *Dancing In The Dark* from reaching the top spot (the track also made it to number four in the UK).

While in Los Angeles shooting extra scenes for the film, Prince continued to work solo on music for the soundtrack, despite having already amassed over a hundred tracks. The fruits of these sessions would include *Take Me With U* and *The Beautiful Ones* (which were both used in the film), *God, 17 Days* and *Erotic City* (released as B-sides), and *Manic Monday* (which was given to The Bangles and became a number-two hit on both sides of the Atlantic for the girl group).

The success of *When Doves Cry* couldn't have been a better launchpad for the release of *Purple Rain* in July 1984. Defying all expectations, the film (which had cost just \$7million to make) grossed over \$75million at the box office. A semi-autobiographical tale set against electrifying live sequences, it was the first rock film of the MTV generation and became a blueprint for subsequent music-based films (Eminem's *8 Mile* being the most notable recent example). And with the album's sales going through the roof



Prince was eager to capture the energy of his live performances on *Purple Rain*

(1.5 million copies were sold in its first week and around 20 million have been shifted since), *Purple Rain* became the most successful merging of music and film since The Beatles' *A Hard Day's Night*.

A commercial juggernaut, it transformed Prince into

picking up American Music Awards, Grammys, a BPI Award (his infamous appearance at the ceremony saw him escorted to the podium by his man-mountain bodyguard Chick Huntzberry) and even an Oscar for Original Song Score.

"In some ways, *Purple Rain* was more detrimental than good. People's perception of me changed and it pigeonholed me. I saw kids coming to concerts who screamed just because that's where the audience screamed in the movie" **PRINCE**

a true global icon, both in terms of his music and his fashion – gone was the pervy poseur of his *Dirty Mind* days, replaced by the rococo stylings of his *Purple Rain* persona, complete with ruffled shirts and Cuban-heeled boots. Meanwhile, girls emulated the leather-and-lingerie get-ups sported by Malvoine, Coleman and Apollonia Kotero (Prince's love interest in the film).

The album was universally praised upon its release, with critics in agreement that, by combining rock with pop, dance, funk and R&B, Prince had created his masterpiece. As well as huge sales, *Purple Rain* cleaned up come awards season,

Spawning five hit singles (*When Doves Cry*, *Let's Go Crazy*, *Purple Rain*, *I Would Die 4 U* and *Take Me With U*) and being the catalyst for Prince's biggest tour to date, the album exceeded everyone's expectations – even its creator's. In fact, the record (and movie) propelled him to a level of fame he was uncomfortable with. "In some ways, *Purple Rain* was more detrimental than good," he told *Entertainment Weekly* in 2009. "People's perception of me changed after that, and it pigeonholed me. I saw kids coming to concerts who screamed just because that's where the audience screamed in the movie. That's why I did [follow-up album]

Around The World In A Day – to totally change that."

Around The World In A Day would be the first in a series of musical departures that would enthrall and challenge his fans in equal measures for the remainder of the 80s – widely regarded as Prince's 'imperial phase' due to the quality and frequency of his output. Though he's continuously recorded and toured ever since, *Purple Rain* will forever be held as the pinnacle of his critical and commercial success.

"Culturally, it was the right statement at the right time," says Alan Leeds. "Disco was dead, pop was bland, punk was struggling to find a balance between the underground and the mainstream, and funk was attempting a renaissance. Like no other project, both musically and visually, Prince and *Purple Rain* brilliantly captured and illustrated that particular place and time." ■



LISTEN UP!

Listen while you read the feature – the

complete *Purple Rain* with added single edits, remixes and B-sides, playlisted at <http://spoti.fi/XZt4ru>



PAUL YOUNG

Soul Classics and the Hits

FRIDAY 24 JUNE
LONDON | THE GRAND

THE SMYTHS
"The Queen Is Dead" 30th Anniversary Concert

Fri 29 & Sat 30 July
London, 100 Club

LOOSE ENDS

London, Jazz Café
Thu 25 Aug 2016
Chatham, The Britannia
Sun 28 Aug 2016

FROM THE JAM The A & B Sides Tour

Birmingham, O₂ Institute2, **Fri 30 Sep 2016**
Oxford, O₂ Academy, **Sat 08 Oct 2016**
Cambridge Junction, **Fri 14 Oct 2016**
Nottingham, Rock City, **Sat 15 Oct 2016**
Salisbury, City Hall, **Fri 28 Oct 2016**
Sheffield, O₂ Academy2, **Sat 29 Oct 2016**
Chatham, Britannia Theatre, **Fri 04 Nov 2016**
Norwich, The Waterfront, **Sat 05 Nov 2016**
Northampton, Roadmenders, **Fri 11 Nov 2016**
Leeds, Brudenell Social Club, **Sat 12 Nov 2016**
London, Clapham Grand, **Fri 25 Nov 2016**
Southampton, The Brook, **Sat 26 Nov 2016**
Warwick, The Copper Rooms, **Fri 20 Jan 2017**

TOYAH
ACOUSTIC, UP CLOSE & PERSONAL
London
Under The Bridge
Saturday 04 June

RHODA DAKAR
sings THE BODYSNATCHERS
+ THE DEFEKTORS
SAT 18 JUNE, LONDON, 100 CLUB

DEXTER BOOTLEG RUNNERS
Birmingham, Hare & Hounds
Friday 24 June 2016
London, 100 Club
Friday 26 August 2016
Bristol, The Tunnels
Saturday 24 September 2016

TOM HINCLEY & the Kar-Pets
play the Inspiral Carpets songbook
thu 28 july, london
the 100 club

agmp.co.uk presents
The Style Councillors
FRIDAY 09 SEPTEMBER
LONDON, 100 CLUB

THE COMPLETE STONE ROSES
16:09:16
LONDON, 100 CLUB

BIG COUNTRY
THE SEER TOUR
FRIDAY 28 OCTOBER 2016
LONDON, UNDER THE BRIDGE
SATURDAY 29 OCTOBER 2016
BRIGHTON, CONCORDE 2
FRIDAY 18TH NOVEMBER 2016
LEEDS, THE BRUDENELL SOCIAL CLUB

SECRET 8 AFFAIR
"BUSINESS AS USUAL" TOUR
FRI 04 NOV, WAKEFIELD, WAREHOUSE 23
SAT 05 NOV, MARGATE, WESTCOAST
SAT 19 NOV, GLASGOW, CLASSIC GRAND
SAT 26 NOV, NOTTINGHAM, RESCUE ROOMS
FRI 02 DEC, LONDON, 229
SAT 03 DEC, BRIGHTON, HAUNT
SAT 10 DEC, SHEFFIELD, LEADMILL
SAT 17 DEC, BELFAST, MANDELA HALL

THE BEAT
FRIDAY 18 NOVEMBER
LONDON, UNDER THE BRIDGE

BAD MANNERS
40th Anniversary Concert
Friday 16th December
London, Under the Bridge



L A T E 1 9 8 0 s

POP LIFE

PRINCE IN THE 80S OFFERED A SMORGASBORD OF SOUL, FUNK, ROCK, POP, R&B, METAL... AND A FEW GENRES THAT HADN'T YET BEEN INVENTED. IN THE PROCESS, HE HELPED DEFINE THE AGE OF DARING AND EXCESS

PAUL LESTER



Prince And
The Revolution on
the *Purple Rain*
Tour, at the
Fabulous Forum on
19 February, 1985 in
Inglewood, California

THERE

was no way Prince could top the statistics and sales figures that *Purple Rain* gave him, so he didn't bother trying. Instead of attempting to replicate that album's colossal success, he withdrew in a sense, eschewing that ultra-commercial sound, journeying instead towards more experimental, psychedelic realms – although it fell mercifully short of full commercial suicide.

Astonishingly, given that he could have easily sat around living off the fat of *Purple Rain* for years, Prince had begun working quietly on the follow-up in scattered sessions prior to the album's release, without the knowledge of his label or band (although, eventually, many musicians would contribute). The resulting album was completed on Christmas Eve, 1984 and released in April 1985, with no radio single or advance promotion, just two weeks after the final date of the *Purple Rain* Tour while the album was still riding high in the charts.

Titled *Around The World In A Day*, it had none of the pop flash, synth dazzle or guitar pyrotechnics of its predecessor. But it did sound rich, even opulent, reflecting the front cover painting depicting Prince And The Revolution in a psychedelic setting that evoked The Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper...* sleeve. From the opening, title track's woozy amalgam of exotic, foreign textures onwards, this was Prince exploring new territories, daring his fans to follow him. There were accessible moments – the single *Raspberry Beret* was a succulent treat, and *Pop Life* was irresistible, even if it did sound as though it was playing at the wrong speed and seemed to be attacking the milieu he had just begun to inhabit – but more than anything, *Around The World In A Day* challenged the very audience he had just accrued. As Prince biographer Alan Light wrote: "It was the

moment that first articulated the creative tension that would play out over the rest of his career: was Prince more naturally a stadium-filling superstar, or was he really the world's biggest cult artist, with a dedicated following ready to follow him down whichever musical path he chose?"

Prince answered the question himself in an interview with *Entertainment Weekly* in 1999. "In some ways, [*Purple Rain*] was more detrimental than good," he said. "People's perception of me changed after that, and it pigeonholed me. I saw kids coming to concerts who screamed just because that's where the audience screamed in the movie. That's why I did *Around The*

World In A Day, to totally change that."

Thanks to the momentum provided by *Purple Rain*, it managed to sell over two million copies and reach No. 1. And though he had at least two more universally acclaimed albums in him, Prince would never again scale those stratospheric heights. Just call it the *Around The World In A Day* effect.

The first of those critically adored albums was 1986's *Parade*, Prince's eighth album

in nine years and the last to feature The Revolution. It was the soundtrack album to the 1986 film *Under The Cherry Moon*, and despite the movie being panned, the music was as lavishly praised as any Prince album to date: NME, for one, voted it No. 1 in its Albums Of The Year critics' poll in December.

ALTERED IMAGE

Parade – which had its genesis the previous April, when Prince walked into a studio, sat down at the drum kit, and proceeded to record the drum parts for its first four songs, consecutively – unveiled a new image for Prince, who was proving as chameleonic and addicted to change as David Bowie had been a decade before. Out went the ruffled shirts, wild curls and purple regalia which defined his look from

AFTER PURPLE RAIN,
PRINCE JOURNEYED
TOWARDS MORE
EXPERIMENTAL,
PSYCHEDELIC REALMS

POP_UP The orchestrations of *Parade* gave the music a neo-classical European feel, courtesy of jazz arranger Douglas Clare Fischer, who provided scores for every song on the album except *Kiss*.






Prince at the Bercy venue in Paris on 15 June, 1987, on the *Sign O' The Times* Tour

Guitarist Wendy Melvoin joined The Revolution as Dez Dickerson's replacement, leaving in 1986 to form Wendy And Lisa with keyboard player Lisa Coleman





Predictably enough, musical polymath Prince was even a fantastic tambourine player

Controversy to *Around The World In A Day*; in came slicked-back hair and dress suits, although the front cover of *Parade* presented a yet more minimalist look, featuring as it did our hero in dramatic monochrome, wearing a tiny crop-top. "He was in a new place, and the whole look started changing and getting sleeker," Wendy Melvoin said in the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*. "There was something very Cary Grant-ish about him. He was happy, and he liked working with all those new people. You could see him growing exponentially. He was fearless, and he wanted to get his hands on all creative aspects of his career."

That sleekness was certainly apparent on *Kiss*, "a slash in the air surrounded by negative space" as *Pitchfork* summed up its simple, staccato strut. A hit around the world, *Kiss* became an instant Prince classic, its spaciousness an indication of his continued audacity.

The album also saw Prince eclipse his US sales with his European ones for the first time in his career. Nevertheless, released on 31 March, 1986 (three months after The Bangles reached No. 2 with the Prince-penned *Manic Monday*), *Parade* charted at No. 3 in the US and was, like its predecessor, a two-million seller, quite a coup considering its brilliant mix of avant-garde pop, wayward funk and esoteric ballads.

In a now-typical manoeuvre, Prince began his next album virtually before the last one had entered the shops. He had been working on two separate projects: what would have been the final *Revolution* album, *Dream Factory*, and a solo effort called *Camille* that would have unveiled a new female persona for Prince, complete with vocals tweaked to resemble a female's. With the dismissal of *The Revolution*, Prince consolidated material from both shelved projects, along with some new songs, into a three-LP album to be titled *Crystal Ball*. His label forced him to trim the triple album to a double, and *Sign O' The Times* was born.

RAVE REVIEWS

Notwithstanding its problematic gestation, it remains, for many, Prince's magnum opus. Armed with a LinnDrum, some samplers, and numerous instruments, it is the greatest showcase for his multifarious talents – pretty much the only other human in the studio at any given moment would have been his trusty engineer, Susan Rogers, who recorded him at various studios in Minneapolis, Los Angeles, even Paris. It was also his most complex and varied collection, ranging, over 16 tracks, from the rap-rivalling minimalist missive that was the title track to the rockabilly ruckus of *Play In The Sunshine*, from the Fairlight funk of *It* to the power pop of *I Could Never Take The Place Of Your Man*.

Released on 31 March, 1987, *Sign O' The Times* might only have reached, respectively, No. 6 and No. 4 in the US and UK, but it was – scarcely believably, considering the praise heaped on its predecessors – the most ecstatically received album of his career. It was voted the Best Album of 1987 in *The Village Voice's* Pazz & Jop critics' poll – according to Robert Christgau,

SPIN CALLED
SIGN O' THE TIMES
"ARGUABLY THE
FINEST ALBUM OF
THE 1980S"

the poll's creator, the album was "easily the biggest winner" in the poll's history and "established Prince as the greatest rock and roll musician of the era – as singer-guitarist-hooksmith-beatmaster, he has no peer." Michaelangelo Matos of *Spin* called it "[Prince's] best album, the most complete example of his artistry's breadth, and arguably the finest album of the 1980s." In 1989, London's *Time Out* magazine went one further, proclaiming it the 'greatest album of all time'.

Given these triumphs, Prince could have coasted till the end of the decade. And yet he sensed that, in the ever-changing world of pop, he couldn't afford to rest for a second if he wanted to maintain his status, especially with the latest developments in R&B such as New Jack Swing, as well as hip-hop threatening his pre-eminence on all sides. So he quickly threw

POP UP Sign O' The Times was nominated for three Grammy Awards – but won none, and was overlooked for Album Of The Year in favour of *The Joshua Tree* by U2.



POP LIFE

KEY ALBUMS, SINGLES, VIDEO, MOMENTS LATE 1980s

PRINCE WINS AN ACADEMY AWARD

MARCH 1985

If there was any doubt about Prince's complete and utter acceptance by the mainstream, there wasn't after this. At the 57th Academy Awards, Prince won the best original song score Oscar (a now defunct category) for *Purple Rain*. The award was presented by Michael Douglas and Kathleen Turner and he was accompanied onstage by Revolution members Lisa Coleman and Wendy Melvoin. He offered the statuette to Melvoin to hold, then gave a brief but memorable acceptance speech in which he thanked his manager, his band members, the Academy and God from beneath a shimmering purple hood, like some sort of musical Jedi master.



AROUND THE WORLD IN A DAY

APRIL 1985

Following the multi-platinum *Purple Rain* with this genre exercise served notice that Prince was never going to make life easy for his record company or his audience, nor would he necessarily give them what they wanted. But his genius was to make sure that even his most outré experiments were accessible enough to be enjoyed for what they were. Besides, the idea that this was Prince's psychedelic album has been overplayed. *Condition Of The Heart* was a beautiful baroque ballad, *Raspberry Beret* and *Pop Life* were infectious albeit woozy pop, *Tambrine* was fractured funk, and *The Ladder* was a John Lennon-style anthem.



RASPBERRY BERET VIDEO

MAY 1985

The words appear onscreen: "Deceive. Inveigle. Obfuscate." Then it's a multi-coloured scene with a bunch of people of all races and creeds dancing together, in a vague echo of the footage from The Beatles' *All You Need Is Love* global satellite broadcast from 1967. Prince scampers on against a sky-blue backdrop, wearing a sky-blue suit and frilly white blouson with a white guitar strapped on, his hair a pimped-up pompadour — he looks positively regal, but from another time, another place. The assembled perform a unison dance, hand-clapping and singing along, in a vision of universal harmony.



POP LIFE

JULY 1985

The second single from *Around The World In A Day* featured the sound of a restless crowd, and you can just make out someone yelling, "Throw the bum out!" — it was taken from one of the Rolling Stones concerts where Prince played support and was booed by the crowd. The lyrics to the song show Prince already feeling disillusioned with the sphere to which he's just acceded, rejecting the trappings of fame ("What U putting in your nose? / Is that where all your money goes?") and generally displaying signs of ennui ("Tell me, what's the matter with your world").



THE BANGLES' MANIC MONDAY

JANUARY 1986

By this stage, Prince was so prolific he was literally giving away hit singles. He originally recorded this song in 1984 as a duet for the band Apollonia 6's self-titled set; after pulling it, he offered it to the nation's other popular all-girl pop-rock band (the other being The Go-Go's) under the pseudonym 'Christopher', i.e. the character he played in the 1986 movie, *Under The Cherry Moon*. In Susanna Hoffs and co's 60s-loving hands, it was pure jangling pop gold, becoming their debut Hot 100 hit and reaching No. 2 in April 1986.



KISS VIDEO

FEBRUARY 1986

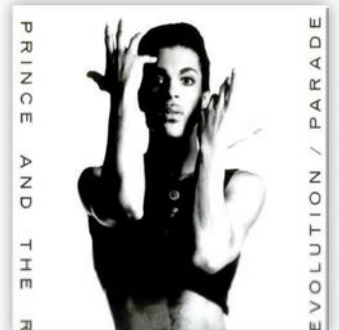
Directed by fashion photographer Rebecca Blake, this video to one of Prince's best-loved singles shows him first in a half-shirt and leather jacket and then shirtless, as he performs choreographed moves in a hall. He is accompanied by the veiled dancer Monique Manning wearing black lingerie and aviator sunglasses, while Revolution member Wendy Melvoin sits playing guitar. "What was fascinating was how brilliantly he moved around in the space of the set," said Blake, who ensured that the video had the "pared-down discipline" of the song. "Everyone on the set was really impressed with how Prince moved and danced."



PARADE

MARCH 1986

Parade divided the critics. Barney Hoskyns wrote at the time in *NME* that "his Rundgren-esque technosoup of Sly and Stevie Wonder is beginning to get very predictable", concluding that it was "laboured and trite and self-satisfied". Yet *Rolling Stone*'s Davitt Sigerson decided Prince was the only latter-day artist to elicit "the kind of anticipation we once reserved for new work by Bob Dylan, The Beatles and The Rolling Stones". Prince, he said, delivered on his eighth album, from the askew funk of *Girls & Boys* to exquisite closing elegy, *Sometimes It Snows In April*.



SIGN O' THE TIMES SINGLE

FEBRUARY 1987

Prince — buoyed by developments in rap — said a lot in very few words on the lead single from his double-LP. He alluded to AIDS (“In France, a skinny man died of a big disease with a little name”); drugs (“By chance his girlfriend came across a needle and soon she did the same”); brought the news (“Hurricane Annie ripped the ceiling off a church...”) and a withering sociopolitical aside (“A sister killed her baby ‘cause she couldn’t afford to feed it / And yet we’re sending people to the moon”). A masterpiece of economy.



SIGN O' THE TIMES ALBUM

MARCH 1987

His second double-LP, *Sign O' The Times* is a solipsist tour de force, Prince playing and producing nearly every note. Listening back, it's clear that not only was he in the richest vein of songwriting form, but he was ready and willing to push his own boundaries, too, incorporating new genre motifs and fresh sounds, and fearlessly fusing together the raw and the futuristic. A *What's Going On* for the 80s, the title cut is an almost biblical revelation, with a simple, sparse groove, like *Kiss* but about death and destruction. *Play In The Sunshine* is filled with child-like glee — imagine Katrina And The Waves' *Walking On Sunshine*, only not annoying. *Housequake* has a crisp, dry beat, and there are orchestral stabs courtesy of Prince's samplers. *The Ballad Of Dorothy Parker* is woozy funk track, with its own internal dream logic. What starts as the tale of Prince's dalliance with a waitress “who worked the night shift” becomes surreal (something about a witch's curse and taking a bath with your pants on), with intimations of violence adding to the sense of dislocation provided by the oblique melody.

It opens with the same beat as New Order's *1963*, the B-side to *True Faith*, issued in summer 1987. The Fairlight orch-stabs carbon-date it. *Starfish And Coffee* is a school-daze reminiscence interpreted as everything from an oral-sex song to an ode to an autistic girl.

U Got The Look is next: how good was Prince, how hot, in 1987? Hot enough to make Sheena Easton seem cool on this dynamic duet. The song introduced into the lexicon the phrase “heck-a-slamin’” even if it was a bit of a shock hearing the Scottish lassie from British reality TV proclaiming, “Let's get to rammin'.” *If I Was Your Girlfriend* was a sure sign of Prince's confidence in his material, hiding this devastating track on Side Two. *Strange Relationship* neatly captured the duality of intense affairs. It had a regular, insistent 4/4 beat, but something in the grain of the groove made it seem experimental. *I Could Never Take The Place Of Your Man* was power pop of the sort that could have been covered by The Knack. *The Cross* was hard and heavy rock with military drums and fuzz guitar. *It's Gonna Be A Beautiful Night* was a nine-minute jazzy, funky vamp.

There were plenty of love songs: the sparsely orchestrated jazzy soul of *Slow Love*, the bid for a safe haven amid all this radical music that was *Forever In My Life*, and closer *Adore*, pure classicist soul romance (“Until the end of time, I'll be there for you”), not to mention an excuse for some vocal pyrotechnics. On his most adult, ambitious work, Prince seemed to come to the same realisation as The Beatles: all you need is love.



IF I WAS YOUR GIRLFRIEND SINGLE

MAY 1987

While only a minor hit (No. 67 on the US Billboard Hot 100, No. 20 in the UK), it was one of his greatest ever songs. Originally from 1986's *Camille* project, the song unveils Prince's female alter ego, his “glamdrogynous” voice tweaked to a womanly pitch to explore the possibilities of a more intimate relationship with his lover, were he to be her girlfriend instead.



THE BLACK ALBUM

DECEMBER 1987 (MOOTED;
FINALLY RELEASED NOVEMBER 1994)

No sooner had Prince dispensed with *Sign O' The Times* than he set to work on this withdrawn follow-up. A key track was *Bob George*, in which he pitched his voice down as effectively as he tweaked it up on *If I Was Your Girlfriend*. Elsewhere, there are hip-hop parodies (*Dead On It*), a paean to supermodel Ms Crawford (*Cindy C*), and tracks that would eventually end up on other albums, notably lush ballad *When 2 R In Love*.



LOVESEXY

MAY 1988

The cover image, based on a photo by Jean-Baptiste Mondino, caused some controversy upon release, as it depicted Prince in the nude — some record stores refused to stock it or wrapped the album in black. It was ironic, as *Lovesexy* was issued as a replacement for *The Black Album*, with its all-black sleeve. That was where the scandals ended, however, because *Lovesexy* was arguably Prince's least offensive, easiest to assimilate collection, perhaps ever. Almost too easy — aside from the singles *Alphabet St* and *Glam Slam*, there was little here that Prince hadn't already offered before, but more originally and emphatically.



LOVE SONG

MARCH 1989

We saw Prince team up, albeit briefly, with Michael Jackson at that James Brown show in 1983. But what would have happened had he joined forces with the era's other megastar, Madonna? He did, on this slow-grinding chunk of funk from her 1989 album *Like A Prayer*. He also played guitar on the album's title track (that famous fuzzy solo at the start? That's Prince), *Keep It Together*, and *Act Of Contrition*. *Love Song* was recorded at Paisley Park, but Madonna's contributions were made long-distance because she hated Minneapolis' freezing weather.

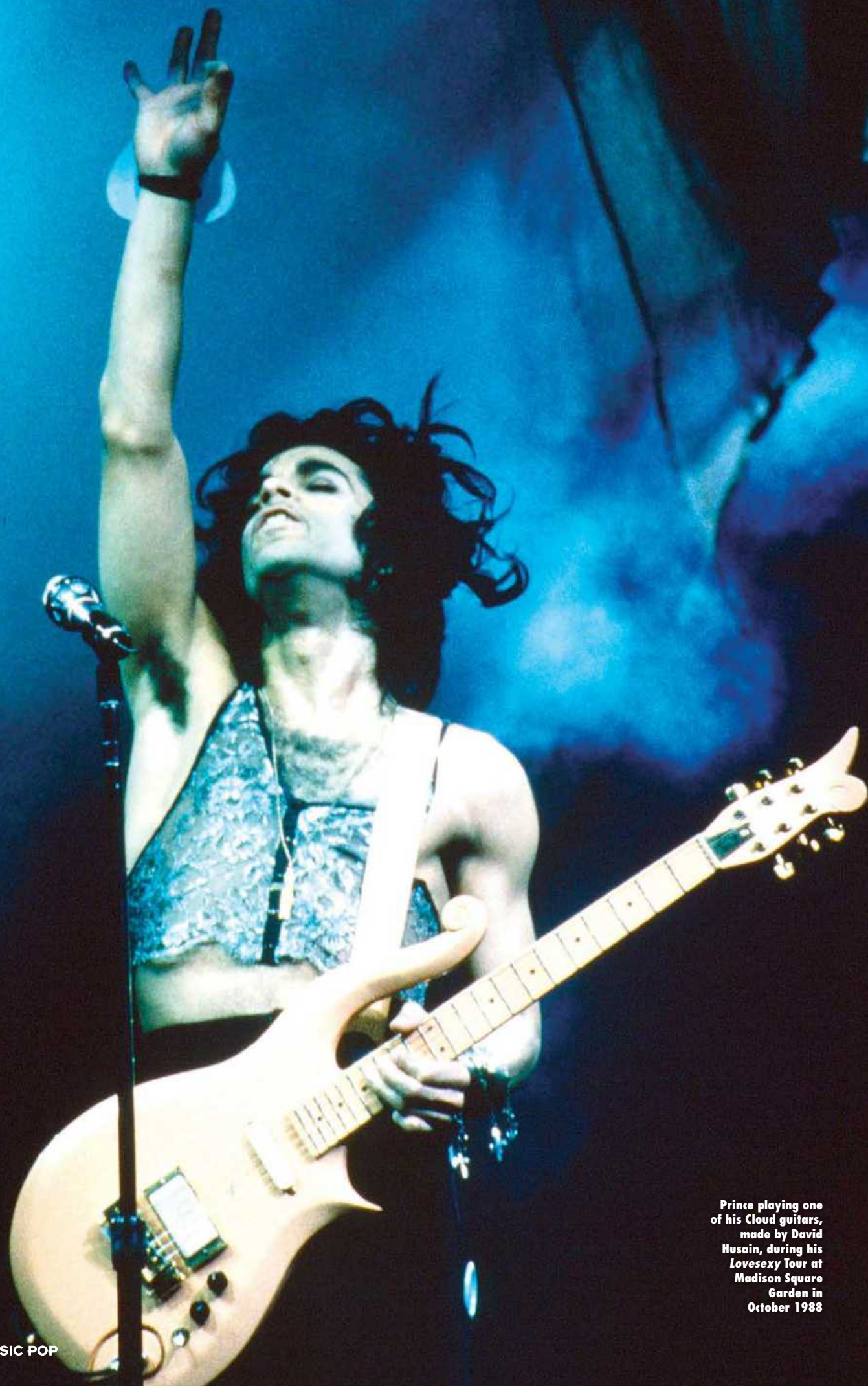


BATMAN

JUNE 1989

After *Lovesexy*, Prince needed a commercial hit — enter Tim Burton, whose dark, gothic interpretation of the DC Comics superhero needed a soundtrack. Recorded in just a few weeks, *Batman* included snippets of the film's dialogue, which some found intrusive. Two of the best tracks didn't make the final cut: *Dance With The Devil*, a paean to the Joker available only on bootlegs, and *The Scandalous Sex Suite*, the 12-inch version of *Scandalous!* which featured Kim Basinger.





Prince playing one of his Cloud guitars, made by David Husain, during his *Lovesexy* Tour at Madison Square Garden in October 1988

Prince at the Sportpaleis in Antwerp, Belgium in July 1988, again on the Lovesexy Tour

© Photoshot

together *The Black Album* for a December 1987 release with the aim of reasserting his primacy, above all with the black underground.

Dubbed *The Funk Bible* by preceding press releases, the intention for the album was for it to appear in an entirely black sleeve with no title or credit to Prince. And yet, for whatever reason – and it has been suggested that either Prince became convinced that the album was ‘evil’ or he had a crisis of conscience over the eroticism and violence of its lyrics – the album was pulled at the 11th hour. Only a handful of promotional copies remained in circulation, and so *The Black Album* became the most notorious rock bootleg since The Beach Boys’ legendary aborted *SMiLE* (it was eventually released in 1994).

As much as Prince was worried about his black audience, he had concerns about his pop one, which is why, in 1988, he mounted his most ambitious tour ever. His tour manager Alan Leeds remembers Prince saying, “You don’t know what it’s like to look at the charts and see guys at No. 1 who can’t sing or play an instrument.”

MONEY DON’T MATTER

The tour was 80s excess incarnate, according to Leeds: “There were over 50 semi-trailers and hundreds of people on the road. You probably didn’t need, like, four hair and makeup people and the ridiculous amounts of wardrobe. But it’s like they say: If you got it, flaunt it.” Leeds recalls Prince wanting “water fountains and a moat around the stage”; in his mind, he was still feeling “the intoxication of *Purple Rain* money”. But the reality was, in early ’88, for the first time, “we felt financial pressure”.

Unfortunately, Prince’s concurrent album, May 1988’s *Lovesexy* – with its infamous nude cover – was Prince’s least successful album since 1982, failing to break the Top 10 and spending just 21 weeks on the

US Billboard 200. While *Alphabet St* managed to crack the Top 10, it came and went rapidly, while the subsequent two single releases (*Glam Slam* and *I Wish U Heaven*) failed to chart.

Artistically, it was deemed in some quarters his least consequential LP since *Controversy*, a hastily assembled substitute for the withdrawn *Black Album*. Critics today are more generous, and it is considered the final spurt of a winning streak that began with *Dirty Mind*, making it the *Scary Monsters (And Super Creeps)* of his repertoire, to continue the Bowie analogy established earlier.

It might have been his last great album, but it certainly wasn’t his last big seller. In 1989, Prince hit the jackpot with his soundtrack to Tim Burton’s *Batman*, co-starring his latest squeeze, Kim Basinger. He was hired on the recommendation of ‘Joker’ Jack Nicholson, a Prince fan who inspired the song *Partyman*. The album, featuring *Batman* samples and lyrics, was recorded in six weeks – from mid-February to late-March 1989 – and was No. 1 on the Billboard chart for

six consecutive weeks, selling over 11 million copies worldwide and including *Batdance*, his fourth No. 1 single and first since *Kiss*.

Whatever your view of the project (“A rare case of Prince doing something for cash and profile,” was Simon Price of the *Guardian*’s retrospective judgement in 2016), it didn’t matter, because there would inevitably be more music to come before long. “People call me a workaholic,” Prince told *Guitar World* magazine in 1998, “but I’ve always considered that a compliment. John Coltrane played the saxophone 12 hours a day. That’s not a maniac; that’s a dedicated musician whose spirit drives his body to work so hard. I think that’s something to aspire to. People say that I take myself too seriously. I consider that a compliment, too.” ■

THE BLACK ALBUM BECAME
THE MOST NOTORIOUS
ROCK BOOTLEG SINCE
THE BEACH BOYS’
LEGENDARY SMILE

POP UP In an interview with Rolling Stone, Prince said: “Did you know that the album was supposed to be a duet between Michael Jackson and me? He as *Batman*, me as the *Joker*?”





FROM THE SEX AND POLITICS – AND SEXUAL POLITICS – OF *DIRTY MIND* TO THE LAVISH, ZEITGEIST-DISSECTING *SIGN O' THE TIMES*, PRINCE SPENT HIS FIRST TWO DECADES OF MUSIC-MAKING PROVING HIS SINGLE-HANDED MASTERY OF FUNK, ROCK, NEW WAVE, POP, R&B AND SOUL WITH CONSUMMATE FLAIR AND AN ALWAYS-PRESENT SENSE OF RISK – AND EVEN DANGER...

PAUL LESTER

ESSENTIAL PRINCE

It wasn't easy to rule the 80s – not with Michael Jackson, Madonna and Bruce Springsteen bestriding the earth like pop (and disco, and funk and rock) colossi – but it could be argued that Prince dominated in the same way that David Bowie dominated the 70s, in terms of agenda-setting, defining the aesthetic tone, and sonic and stylistic advances. Certainly, his run of good, great, even superlative albums – which began in the late 70s – is as long as anyone's, not just those from the 80s (and yes, that includes the obvious Beatles/Dylan/Beach Boys/Stones as well as Bowie and Stevie Wonder). And if he eventually got overtaken by a) legions of imitators, b) hip hop and c) new jack swing, at least he could boast that he pretty much owned that seven- or eight-year period.

Prince was born in June 1958, two months before Michael and Madonna. When he emerged as a teen prodigy in 1978, funk had peaked, Sly was on the slide, and although George Clinton's Parliament/Funkadelic crews did major business in concerts, record sales and radio-wise it was all about disco: the

symphonic boogie of Earth, Wind & Fire and the shiny Sound Of Upwardly Mobile Black America provided by Chic. Yet there was no solo black artist in the ascendancy (Michael had yet to release *Off The Wall*), and for a while, it actually looked as though Prince would forever remain in the shadow of that other rising star of R&B, Rick James.

Before long, he eclipsed James and virtually everyone else, because whatever they could do – sing, play guitar, write, produce – Prince could do it himself, and probably better. Eventually, the polymorphous polymath from Minneapolis (trying saying that with a mouth full of diamonds and pearls) would release 10 platinum albums and 30 Top 40 singles, shelve hundreds more songs, and launch or revive the careers of Sinead O'Connor, The Bangles and Chaka Khan. And although he failed to sustain the colossal level of success of the 80s, his output that decade ensured his status forevermore as an all-time great. No wonder, in 2004, he was inducted into the hallowed portals of the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame, while *Rolling Stone* ranked him No 27 on its list of the 100 Greatest Artists Of All Time.

THE MUST-HAVE ALBUMS



PRINCE

1979

Laying the groundwork

Prince diehards insist he has always made must-have music, starting with 1978's *For You*, right up to 2015's *HITnRun Phase One/Phase Two* double-whammy. And they would be right – if you like Prince, then you're a lifer. But a further contention, which also has its proponents, is that although he has continued to release excellent, noteworthy records, he did all his crucial work between 1978 and 1987, and that since then, he has merely reiterated his contributions, albeit with dextrous finesse.

Prince might not have exactly hit the ground running in harsh commercial terms, but creatively the signs were there from the start: *For You*, a startling debut for anyone, let alone an 18-year-old singer, songwriter, producer and multi-instrumentalist. The self-titled follow-up was even stronger, ranging from the disco strut of *I Wanna Be Your Lover* and the rockier *Why You Wanna Treat Me So Bad?* to the funkified *Sexy Dancer* and R&B ballads *Still Waiting* and *It's Gonna Be Lonely*, not to mention *I Feel For You*, later a hit for Chaka Khan. Prince managed to claw its way as high as No 22 on the Billboard chart and chalked up sales of 3,000,000.



DIRTY MIND

1980

Not for the prudish

If the soft focus image of the previous album's sleeve, and Prince's falsetto, suggested a coy androgyny, then the character pictured on his third album sleeve – all black bikini briefs, bandana and open jacket – suggested a sexed-up imp of the perverse: "Confessions of a sex junkie," as one reviewer put it. And if the song titles pointed towards the presence of a certain one-track mind – *Do It All Night*, *Head* – then a close scan of the credits confirmed his controlling impulse, with every last note attributed to Prince with the exception of some synths courtesy of Matt 'Dr' Fink, later of The Revolution, and vocals from Lisa Coleman, one half of Wendy & Lisa. The music itself was a catchy brand of brittle new-wave pop-funk, even edging towards power pop on the lewd, lascivious *Sister* and *When You Were Mine*. It was so infectious, indeed, that while *When You Were Mine* is super-recognisable, it wasn't even issued as a single. The simple fact was that not much of this material was considered clean enough for mass consumption... although, radio rotation aside, it still managed to enter the Billboard charts at No 63.



PURPLE RAIN

1984

The album, the movie... the cultural event

With estimates veering between 20 and 30 million sales, *Purple Rain* remains Prince's big blockbuster release. Beaten in the 80s-ubiquity stakes only by *Thriller* and matched only by *Like A Virgin* and *Born In The USA*, it is the album that marked his transition from famous pop artist to star with serious cultural traction; *Rolling Stone* pegged it as the second greatest album of the 80s. The soundtrack to the film of the same name, the songs were like movies in miniature, conjuring whole scenarios even as the music swirled with possibility. The track titles read like a Greatest Hits collection, even if just the concert staple – and album/movie opener – *Let's Go Crazy*, *Take Me With U*, *I Would Die 4 U*, the title cut and the immortal *When Doves Cry* were issued as singles. Beyond those there was the shockadelic *Darling Nikki*, which required a Parental Advisory sticker all its own, the frantic *Baby I'm A Star*, the showcase for The Revolution that was *Computer Blue*, and the languid *The Beautiful Ones*, which fused R&B and rock as effectively as Prince merged urban and mainstream audiences in 1984.



SIGN O' THE TIMES

1987

Double blockbuster

Whatever you thought of the quality, there was no denying the quantity: Prince is the most prolific artist of his generation. *Sign O' The Times* was his prodigious peak: the sum of three separate projects slimmed down to a double-album summation of everything he could do, as well as an index of pointers towards his – and pop's – future. The sheer reach and range of the record(s) were breathtaking: the AIDS-era, crack'd dissection of America that was the funkily minimalist title track; the peppy *I Could Never Take The Place Of Your Man* and its sister track, the polymorphously sensuous *If I Was Your Girlfriend*, featuring a studio-tweaked Prince in the character of his alter ego Camille; the slam-dunk funk of *U Got The Look*, starring a virtually unidentifiable Sheena Easton (just call it The Prince Effect); the experimental arrhythmia of *The Ballad Of Dorothy Parker*... *Sign O' The Times* was an eclectic delight from start to the finish, and a remarkable showcase for Prince, who raised monomania and studio solipsism to new heights. Is this the last classic soul album, or the first modern R&B one, begetting Timbaland, Neptunes, et al? Both.

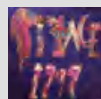
AND THE REST...



Controversy

1981

Prince expands his ambit on his fourth studio album, with its treatises on God (the title track), international relations (*Ronnie, Talk To Russia*) and, possibly, gun control, although it's hard to tell (*Annie Christian*). But the sex obsession is still there, on *Do Me, Baby*, which features some trademark orgiastic screeches, wails and coos; *Let's Work*, which draws squiggly lines between graft and gratification; *Sexuality*, which apparently "is all you'll ever need"; and *Jack U Off*, an indecently chirpy ode to digit-based pleasure, whose fizzy synths and bouncy gait anticipate *Let's Go Crazy*, the opener from *Purple Rain*. There were four singles lifted from the album – the title track, the propulsive funk of *Let's Work*, *Do Me, Baby* and *Sexuality* – and although none of them overly troubled the mainstream, it was abundantly clear that Prince would not be a private joy for very much longer.

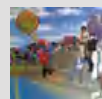


1999

1982

Prince's fifth studio album was his commercial

breakthrough and his first to feature The Revolution (at this point, Dez Dickerson, Brown Mark, Bobby Z, Lisa Coleman and Matt Fink). It was his first Top 10 album, building inexorably to the Year Of Prince that was 1984. Even if it only featured the title track (astonishingly, not a hit until its re-release on the back of the album's success) and *Little Red Corvette* (which reached No 6 on the Billboard Chart), 1999 would have been a strong release. The jittery synth-funk of *Delirious* (the third single and second Top 10 hit), *Automatic* (a single, but only in Australia), the askew art-pop of *Let's Pretend We're Married* (the album's final US single), the funkastic *Lady Cab Driver*, the R&B slow jam *International Lover* and the self-reflexive *All The Critics Love U In New York*, all help to make this a defining moment in Prince's rise.

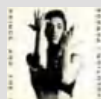


Around The World In A Day

1985

You could never accuse

Prince of doing the same thing twice; not in the 80s, anyway. This was a retreat of sorts from *Purple Rain*, musically and in terms of (self-)promotion: the cover image, a painting hardly flaunting the new global superstar, was more arty than charty, while Prince insisted the album be released with minimal publicity, not issuing a single until a month later. When they came, they were good ones: *Paisley Park*, *America*, *Raspberry Beret* and *Pop Life*. The album isn't quite as psychedelic as critics said; rather, it found Prince exploring uncharted areas, notably on piano meander *Condition Of The Heart* and *Temptation*, all squawking sax and avant-jazzy coda, on which our hero effected a radical volte face, declaring "love is more important than sex". Still, no move was too weird for Prince at this point: *Around The World In A Day* went to No 1.



Parade

1986

The film it soundtracked – *Under A Cherry Moon*

– may have been a misfire, but Prince's eighth album continued his purple patch. It was an advance on, or refinement of, the lysergic, off-kilter funk of *Around The World In A Day*, Prince sounding even more intoxicated by his own heady powers as he staggered from one dizzying sonic invention to another. *Kiss*, the No 1 single, was the entry-point, and *Girls & Boys*, *Mountains* and *Anotherloverhole* enyohead maintained the momentum, but once you were in, *Parade* offered new pleasures: the swirling cabaret of *Under The Cherry Moon*, the faux chanson of *Do U Lie?*, the instrumental *Venus De Milo*, the disorienting gait of *Christopher Tracy's Parade*, and elegiac album closer *Sometimes It Snows In April*. Many magazines' album of the year and a two-million seller, *Parade* was superlative business as usual for Prince.

THE ESSENTIAL SINGLES



1999

1982

Dreamin' when he wrote this

There had been brilliant Prince singles before this – *I Wanna Be Your Lover*, *Dirty Mind*, *Controversy* – but this was unmistakably the one that brought him out onto the world stage, the one that screamed 'major artist alert!' And this despite the fact that the stadium synth-funk opus didn't actually dent the US Top 40 on its first release in late 1982 – it was only on its reissue following the success of *Little Red Corvette* that it reached No 12, in July 1983.

Today, of course, after spending 33 years as a daytime-radio staple – whenever programmers want to connote excitement, urgency or any kind of party atmosphere – it is one of the most familiar songs in pop history, from the second that triple cluster of rising and falling chords and that beat start. And it marked Prince out as the erotic pop politician and the funk-up homunculus of apocalyptic sex.



LITTLE RED CORVETTE

1983

Car trouble

Nothing says 'burgeoning MTV era' like the dreamy synths and machine pulse that open this song, just before it explodes into the chorus – and choruses don't come much more explosive than the one on Prince's 18th single. It may have quivered with 80s sexual abandon, but *Little Red Corvette* managed the neat trick of sounding utterly contemporary while alluding to pop past and the rich history of car songs, many of which used the automobile either as metaphor for sex or a symbol of escape.

Prince conflated them both, and used a white tradition (thanks to Brian Wilson and Bruce Springsteen) as the basis for some blistering black pop, complete with gospel hollers and guitar solo. During this time, only Michael Jackson was breaking down as many racial barriers. No bad for a song dreamed up by Prince after he fell asleep in Lisa Coleman's pink Edsel.



WHEN DOVES CRY

1984

America's biggest hit of 1984

The No 1 best-selling single of the year, two million units shifted... but mere statistics can't do justice to this landmark release, not just for Prince, but for American music. And it didn't even feature any bass! In fact, *When Doves Cry* is testament to Prince's ability to make unorthodox music for the masses as he secretes avant-garde ideas into the mainstream. It starts with a ravishing purple plume of guitar – the master's signature – before he invites the listener to "Dig if u will the picture". And what a picture, all florid imagery ("an ocean of violets in bloom") amid intimations of carnality ("Animals strike curious poses") ahead of some childhood memories with their intimations of Oedipal frissons and Freudian urges. "How can u just leave me standing?/ Alone in a world that's so cold?" wonders our hero, sounding not unlike that other star of 1984, Morrissey. Simply sublime.



PURPLE RAIN

1984

The epic to end all epics

No only the ultimate Prince ballad, *Purple Rain* is also one of the ultimate monuments to baroque anthemia – think of it as the R&B *Stairway To Heaven*, eight minutes and 42 seconds of soul and rock at their most orgiastic and overblown. The last several minutes are all climax, eruption and coda: what you might call Prince postplay (although, needless to say, the track had to be cut in half for single release).

If any of Prince's songs posited him as some kind of condensed amalgam of rock and R&B greats past, it was this one, from the testifying fervour of the Marvin/Curtis/Al/Stevie-channelling vocal right up to the Hendrix-style guitar freak-out at the end.

"U say u want a leader," he sings, by implication proposing himself for the role. With the key song from the key album of the most talked-about movie of the year, the job was his.



KISS

1986

Stripped-down stunner

If *Purple Rain* was a masterpiece of symphonic excess, *Kiss* was a minimalist feat. Based around a simple blues progression, the devil was in the detail – the one-off "aahs" that follow "impress me", the curlicue of guitar that separates the chorus and the pay-off title word – and the spacious production: *Kiss* really was just voice, guitar, bass and drums, with a lot of space between each one. As though to prove less is more, the single – his 31st, astonishingly – reached No 1 in the US and No 6 in the UK, where music paper *NME* voted it No 4 in their list of the 150 Greatest Singles of All Time. Two years later, the post-Morley/Horn version of *Art Of Noise* had a hit with it, featuring a rather more maximalist performance from Tom Jones.



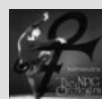
IF I WAS YOUR GIRLFRIEND

1987

Sonic platonic

Sign O' The Times was the bigger hit, but if any single represents Prince in his pomp, bringing the extraordinary into our lives, it was this, the second single from his double-LP masterpiece. It didn't fare well in the charts: perhaps the title was a step too far, perhaps listeners didn't recognise the vocals (Prince sped up his voice so that he might more realistically assume the guise of alter ego Camille), or maybe people didn't understand why Prince wanted to become a woman so that he could better enjoy his relationship with his girlfriend. Whatever, the music was exquisite slow-motion liquid funk, all sparse bass and machine beat, with a keyboard motif that was melancholy itself.

NOT-SO-CLASSIC LATER CUTS

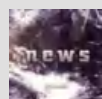


Kamasutra

1998

Internet pre-orders of the *Crystal Ball* box set

contained this album by the pseudonymous The NPG Orchestra. All the tracks were in a jazz or neo-classical style, some featuring found sounds – such as *Cutz*, built on a sample of scissors snapping. Avoid.



N.E.W.S.

2003

This, Prince's 24th studio album, contained four tracks

of jazz, funk and new age waffle, each one – titled *North*, *South*, *East* and *West* – clocking in at exactly 14 minutes. It was reputedly his lowest-selling album to date, with just 30,000 copies bought.



NEED TO KNOW

● Apparently, before he embarked on his superstar trajectory, Prince was so poor that he would stand outside McDonald's on Plymouth Avenue in Minneapolis where he would inhale the food. That's right: he would smell it, not eat it.

● Prince released 39 studio albums, five soundtrack albums, four live albums, plus several internet-only releases. Many of the vast array of unreleased works in the vaults have surfaced as bootlegs.

● According to legend, Prince wrote his first song when he was seven and

danced with James Brown when he was 10, after his stepfather put him onstage with the Godfather of funk at a gig. He would later dance with Brown – and Michael Jackson – during a show at the Beverly Theatre in Los Angeles in 1983.

● Michael Jackson wrote *Bad* intending it to be a duet with Prince, but the latter was not taken with the song's lyrics, particularly the opening line, "Your butt is mine". "Who's singing that to whom?" he is alleged to have enquired, adding: "Because you sure aren't singing that to me."

THE MUST-WATCH VIDEOS

LITTLE RED CORVETTE

DIRECTOR: BRYAN GREENBERG

Released in February 1983, this was the second video by a black artist to be played in heavy rotation on MTV, after Michael Jackson's *Billie Jean*. It doesn't feature much beyond Prince on a stage, performing, writhing and contorting and just generally Being Prince. It captures him at this, an early peak, between the releases of the 1999 and *Purple Rain* albums, with that iconic ringlet-y hair, the kohl-black eyes, white frilly blouson and purple suit, smouldering at the camera. Half of the band appear to be funk musicians; the other half look as though they're moonlighting from a new-wave power-pop combo. Meanwhile, Prince pirouettes across the stage, does the splits, drops to his knees, breakdances, does the time-honoured microphone stand flip-kick trick, plays air guitar and flaunts his purple munificence. It might not have won awards for originality but as a showcase for early-80s Prince, it's hard to beat: nothing encapsulates 1983 quite like the *Little Red Corvette* video.



KISS

DIRECTOR: REBECCA BLAKE

The video for the groundbreaking *Kiss* was just as striking as the music. Another exercise in stripped-down minimalist chic, it featured Prince dressed in a black crop-top and leather jacket, sashaying around – moving, in a sense, like Jagger – in a hall accompanied by a veiled dancer called Monique Manning in black lingerie and Aviator sunglasses while Revolution member Wendy Melvoin – one half of Wendy & Lisa and identical twin of Susannah, to whom Prince was once engaged – sits coolly centre-stage on a stool, strumming on a guitar and wincing when Prince shimmies in to whisper sexily in her ear. It remains one of the few examples in the music-video pantheon of a male artist cavorting around while the female assumes the role of the solid, steady muso. It's the anti-*Blurred Lines*, if you will. It also established director Rebecca Blake as a photographer of renown: she subsequently shot and/or filmed the likes of Angelina Jolie, Claudia Schiffer, Kate Moss, Cindy Crawford and John Travolta.



ALPHABET ST.

DIRECTOR: PATRICK EPSTEIN

The decision to make a video for *Alphabet St.* was apparently a spur-of-the-moment thing, after Prince had a change of heart about not wanting to film a promo. It features Prince performing (prancing, jack-knifing, you know the score) the track against a backdrop of fast-cut images and computer-generated letters, flashing one of his trademark bizarre guitars and wearing multicoloured eyeshadow and trousers with his name on them. There are several hidden messages: one, not to buy *The Black Album*, another warning about the perils of hard drugs ("H is 4 Punks"), and a third declaring, "Heaven Is So Beautiful". A convertible white Ford Thunderbird makes a cameo appearance, and it's all very entertaining, albeit somewhat random and on-a-shoestring given the magnitude of the artist involved. Director Patrick Epstein subsequently directed the promo for *Sexy MF* as well as a number of live in-house concerts featuring Culture Club, The Cure, Motörhead, The Thompson Twins and more.



BATDANCE

DIRECTOR: ALBERT MAGNOLI

In contrast to such straightforward stage-style showcases as *Little Red Corvette*, this promo video did have a bit of attention, and money, lavished on it. In fact, this spin-off from the 1989 *Batman* movie – which Prince soundtracked on his album of the same name – earned him a 1990 Soul Train Music Award nomination for Best R&B/Soul Music Video, and a nomination for Best Video From A Film in the MTV Video Music Awards of the same year. The choreography – which was created by Paula Abdul, making a rare return to dance in the early stages of her own singing career – involved dancers dressed as multiple Batmen, Jokers and Vicki Vales, all pirouetting and somersaulting in formation among clouds of dry ice. Prince, meanwhile, appears both as himself, playing guitar, bass and keyboards with inevitable chutzpah, and as a character in a costume and facepaint known as 'Gemini', with one side representing the Joker (evil), and the other, Batman (good). It all probably seemed like a really good idea at the time.



If any of Prince's songs posited him as a condensed amalgam of rock and R&B greats past, it was *Purple Rain*, from the testifying Marvin/Curtis/Al/Stevie-channelling vocal up to the Hendrix-style guitar freak-out at the end

PRINCE'S LEGACY

Prince's untimely death has left many fans to wonder what might have been, as well as a mountain of speculation about the archive of music and recorded performances still in the Warner and Paisley Park vaults.

In 2014, Prince was described as "upset" with what he termed "social media rumours" about a possible appearance at the Glastonbury Festival. "We're always having a go at Prince, but it's up to him whether he wants to do it or not," festival organiser

Michael Eavis told reporters. "Most of the people in the world want him to play here." He joked: "I did ask

him to hop on the train and come down so I can show him around the farm sometime. The offer hasn't been taken up yet."

As for the archive, thought to consist of hundreds of unreleased compositions, it has also emerged since his death that

Prince recorded what *The Telegraph* describes as a 'treasure trove' of intimate live performances.

"I DID ASK HIM TO COME DOWN SO I CAN SHOW HIM AROUND THE FARM, BUT THE OFFER HASN'T BEEN TAKEN UP" — MICHAEL EAVIS, IN 2014



LISTEN UP!

Here are some of our all-time Prince faves...

1 For You

Audacious 68-second a cappella.

2 I Wanna Be Your Lover

Prince as a disco contender...

3 Why You Wanna Treat Me So Bad?

...and as rock'n'roll rebel.

4 When You Were Mine

Power pop in excelsis.

5 Controversy

Seven minutes of lubricious funk.

6 Jack U Off

It's certainly an offer.

7 Something In The Water (Does No Compute)

The backing track could be Japan.

8 I Would Die 4 U

In a word: ravishing.

9 Pop Life

Is this the wrong speed? Good.

10 Sometimes It Snows In April

Wintry desolation in spring.

11 The Ballad Of Dorothy Parker

Experimental pop at its finest.

12 Alphabet St.

Last great purple-period single.

13 Thieves In The Temple

A torrid delight.

14 My Name Is Prince

And furthermore, he is funky.

15 Come

Baby, there ain't nobody better.

16 The Most Beautiful Girl In The World

Very nearly Todd Rundgren.

17 Musicology

Let it unwind ur mind.

18 Sticky Like Glue

Janelle who?

19 PRETZELBODYLOGIC

If Steely Dan played funk-metal.

20 FALLINLOVE2NITE

Zooey Deschanel plays Sheila E.

<http://bit.ly/1tDYaoq>



PART 2

PRINCE UNDER THE COVERS

IT'S PART 2 OF OUR TOP 20 PRINCE SONGS AS COVERED BY OTHER PEOPLE... GET READY FOR THE EARWORMS!

MARK LINDORES

10 SHEENA EASTON SUGAR WALLS

1985

One of Prince's most unexpected collaborators was undoubtedly Sheena Easton. Having launched her career on an Esther Rantzen TV talent show called *The Big Time*, Easton's girl-next-door image was shattered when she moved to America and began working with Prince. Their first collaboration, *Sugar Walls*, was an innuendo-laced slice of electro-funk in the vein of Prince's other raunchy protégés, which had his purple fingerprints all over it. Upon release, the track was included on a list called the 'Filthy Fifteen', compiled by Tipper Gore and the Parents' Music Resource Centre, naming the most indecent songs based on lyrical content. "It doesn't say, 'Let's have intercourse', or 'Oh my, what a wonderful penis you have'," Sheena told Q in 1991. "I've sung songs before and since that were sexual, *Sugar Walls* was just another song which, without getting too hoity-toity, was an artistic interpretation of a sexual, a love relationship."



9 VANITY 6 NASTY GIRL

2005

After signing his deal with Warner Brothers on the understanding he would sign and write and produce for other artists, Prince had the idea of creating an all-female group called The Hookers to perform the songs he had written from a female perspective (something he would do throughout his career). He met model Denise Matthews at the 1980 American Music Awards and asked her to front the group he was putting together. She accepted, and he renamed her Vanity, because she was his “female reflection”. Vanity was Prince’s second choice; originally, he wanted to call her Vagina to encapsulate what the group was about – three girls in lingerie, gyrating to a sleazy synth-laden funk song, purring, “Do you think I’m a nasty girl?”. Other tracks, such as *Wet Dream* and *Drive Me Wild*, were big club hits, but *Nasty Girl* was their biggest hit. Vanity left the group in 1983 following her break-up with Prince, and sadly, she died in February 2016, following kidney failure.



8 THE ART OF NOISE FEAT. TOM JONES KISS

1988

Having written *Kiss* in 1985 for his bass player Brown Mark’s new band, Prince loved the song so much that he decided to keep it and released it as *Parade*’s lead single in 1986. The song was a Top 10 hit around the world and hit No.1 in the US, which is where Tom Jones, who was performing in Vegas at the time, heard it. He added the song into his live set and performed it on Jonathan Ross’ TV show *The Last Resort*. His performance was watched by millions, including The Art Of Noise’s Anne Dudley, who thought he would be an ideal candidate for a cover of the song. With its industrial drums, sound effects (the sound of the zipper on “I know how to undress me”) and Tom’s booming voice a polar opposite to Prince’s falsetto, the song was radically different from the original. When Tom ad-libbed “I think I better dance now”, the group added their own touch of genius – a brass section playing snippets of their hits, *Peter Gunn* and *Dragnet*.



7 CYNDI LAUPER WHEN YOU WERE MINE

1983

Having left her band Blue Angel to embark on a solo career, Cyndi was working on her debut album when she first heard *When You Were Mine*, a song from Prince's 1980 *Dirty Mind* album. "I didn't really know Prince when I first heard the song," she says. "He was just a skinny guy in a g-string and a jacket, who I'd seen open for The Rolling Stones and was stirring things up." When it was suggested that Cyndi cover the song, she agreed immediately. "I loved the synths in the song; they gave it a real dance club sound and I was inspired. I loved the way the story in the song read, and I started thinking of ways of adding salt and pepper to it to make it mine." By deciding to keep the lyrics as Prince had written them, the song's subject matter was now about a love triangle with a bisexual boyfriend, a taboo subject in 1983, which stopped it being released as a single in the US, rendering it a hidden gem on the *She's So Unusual* album.



6 TLC GET IT UP

1993

TLC first came to Prince's attention when he attended an MC Hammer concert to check out the rapper, who was riding high with his hit single *Pray* (a song which heavily sampled *When Doves Cry*), and was immediately taken with the support group, a quirky trio whose anthems of female empowerment skilfully blended rap and R&B. TLC cited him as a major influence and covered *Get It Up*, a song Prince had written for The Time in 1981, capturing perfectly the song's bawdy spirit. It became a Top 40 hit in the US and determined the sound TLC would adopt for their next album, *CrazySexyCool*, an album littered with Prince's influence. It included a cover of *If I Was Your Girlfriend*, and it went on to sell over 25 million copies. Producer Dallas Austin cited Apollonia 6's *Blue Limousine* as a sonic influence.

"I wanted T-Boz to sound like Prince used to sound, but put on her own thing," he said. In 1995, Prince appeared at the MTV Awards to introduce TLC, calling them "my favourite group".



5 MADONNA FEAT. PRINCE LOVE SONG

1989

With his planned collaboration with Michael Jackson the previous year dead before it even got off the ground, Prince worked much more successfully with Madonna. The third member of 80s pop's holy trinity, Madonna had much more in common with Prince, both being controversial figures whose main lyrical sources came from sex and religion. Prince and Madonna began working together in 1988, with a prospective idea of writing a Broadway musical. However, after a few writing sessions in Minneapolis, both discovered their schedules would not allow the time required to do it. "We ended up writing it long-distance, because I had to be in LA and he couldn't leave Minneapolis, and quite frankly, I couldn't stand Minneapolis," Madonna later said.

A sparse, keyboard-driven ballad, *Love Song* was the only song they completed, and it featured on the *Like A Prayer* album in 1989, with Prince also playing guitar on the album's title track.



4 MARTIKA LOVE... THY WILL BE DONE

1991

Having achieved global fame as a teen idol in the late-80s with hits such as *Toy Soldiers* and *More Than You Know*, Martika approached Prince about working together on her second album, as she wanted to pursue a more mature direction. The result of the collaboration was four songs, including the title cut, on 1991's *Martika's Kitchen* album with *Love... Thy Will Be Done*, a sublime, gospel-tinged ballad standing out as one of Prince's greatest. The song came about after Martika presented Prince with her lyric notebook at their initial meeting at Paisley Park, "Love... Thy Will Be Done was a prayer that I had written in my notebook," says Martika. "I showed him some of my stuff and he asked if he could photocopy a few things that he liked, and I had no problem with that and I flew home to L.A. About a week later I received a cassette and that's how I first heard it. My prayer was turned into *Love... Thy Will Be Done* and from there, he sent me the master."



3 CHAKA KHAN I FEEL FOR YOU

1984

The beginning of Prince's incredible knack for writing songs from a female perspective, *I Feel For You* and *I Wanna Be Your Lover* from 1979's self-titled album both began life as songs intended for R&B singer Patrice Rushen, but, as she didn't want them, Prince recorded them himself for his second album. The Pointer Sisters had already covered *I Feel For You* in 1982 before Chaka Khan recorded the song for her 1984 album. Produced by Arif Mardin, Chaka's version incorporated funk and electro and a harmonica solo from Stevie Wonder, as well as a rap from Melle Mel from Grandmaster Flash & The Furious Five. A technical glitch in the studio, which meant Mel kept repeating Chaka's name was kept in the final mix as the intro, and has since become one of the song's most famous lines. Reaching No. 1 in the US and the UK, the single sold over a million copies and was the first Prince-penned song to top the charts in the UK.



2 THE BANGLES MANIC MONDAY

1986

Credited to 'Christopher', Prince's character Christopher Tracy from his *Under The Cherry Moon* film, *Manic Monday* had originally been written for Apollonia 6, but was saved by Prince and instead given to The Bangles. Prince had seen a Bangles video on MTV and then went to see them live in LA, going backstage after the concert to give them a cassette containing two tracks. "One was *Manic Monday* and the other was called *Jealous Girl*," recalls Susanna Hoffs. "The demo just had a girl singing it. I think he was offering us the track so we'd sing it the same way. But we wanted to do the whole thing from the ground up." Wracked with nerves about recording a song by Prince, The Bangles recorded it the following week. "Prince came to our rehearsal after the record was done, and he was really thrilled with how it came out." The single reached No. 2 in both the UK and the US, where it was kept off the top spot by Prince's own *Kiss*.



1 SINEAD O'CONNOR NOTHING COMPARES 2 U

1990

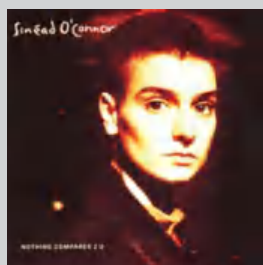
It was while working on his side project, The Family's self-titled debut album in 1984, that Prince crafted one of his very best compositions. Having heard about a member of the band's bitter breakup with his girlfriend, Prince drew from a personal experience and created a masterpiece. *Nothing Compares 2 U* was just an album track on an obscure Prince-related collectable until Sinead O'Connor, who had been working on her second album, wanted to cover the song as a tribute to her late mother, who had died in a car accident in 1985. The song had come to mean a lot to her since.

The recording process did not run smoothly, with Sinead and producer Nellee Hooper clashing, leading him to abandon the project halfway through. Chris Birkett was brought in to complete the song, and found himself working with a very emotional Sinead.

"I actually think the intensity of Sinead's performance also came from the breakup of her latest relationship," Chris told *Sound On Sound*. "She had been dating her manager, Fachtna O Ceallaigh and their relationship had gone pear-shaped, and they were in the process of breaking up when we recorded *Nothing Compares 2 U*. So that's probably why she did such a good vocal... It mirrored her situation."

The single was released on 8 January 1990 and was accompanied by a legendary video directed by Chris Maybury, which perfectly complemented Sinead's haunting vocal. The scene in which a lone tear spills down her cheek is regarded as one of the greatest music-video moments of all time – capturing the song's raw emotion. "It was the video that really broke the song," Birkett says. "When the video came out, everything went ballistic."

It topped the singles chart three weeks later and stayed there for four weeks. Repeating the success around the world, *Nothing Compares 2 U* went to No. 1 in 12 countries, including America. It was while she was in America promoting her album *I Do Not Want What I Haven't Got*, that Sinead finally met Prince for the first time, though the union was anything but celebratory. "We didn't get on at all. In fact, we had a punch-up," she said. "He summoned me to his house after *Nothing Compares 2 U* because I made it without him. I'd never met him. He summoned me to his house and he said he didn't like me saying bad words in interviews. So I told him to f**k off. He got quite violent. I had to escape out of his house at five in the morning. He packed a bigger punch than me."



Prince reclaimed the song after Sinead's success, playing it regularly on tour, and released a live duet with Rosie Gaines on his 1993 compilation, *The Hits/The B-Sides*.

In March 2015, Sinead announced on Facebook that she would no longer perform the song live. "The first principle of the manner in which I'm trained as a singer (*Bel Canto*) is we never sing a song we don't emotionally identify with. After 25 years of singing it, nine months or so ago, I finally ran out of anything I could use in order to bring some emotion to it. I don't want audiences to be disappointed coming along to a show and then not hearing it, so am letting you know here that you won't." ■







1990s

my name is prince

THE 90S SAW PRINCE CELEBRATE SOME OF HIS BIGGEST HITS WORLDWIDE, BUT HE ALSO SUFFERED LEGAL BATTLES AND PERSONAL TRAGEDY...

MARK LINDORES



Prince performs at the 1991 MTV Video Music Awards in LA

PRINCE

must have been mistaken when he proclaimed he had "seen the future" on the opening track of his '89 *Batman* album. If he had, he would have barricaded himself inside the Batcave for the next decade, which brought as it did, so few highs and a cataclysm of lows that would blight his personal life and damage his career beyond repair.

AN ERA OF UNCERTAINTY

The dawn of the 90s found Prince in a state of uncertainty. *Batman* had been a big success, yet it was unclear if that had been on the basis of it being a great album or because it was tied to a hugely successful comic-book franchise. He had just seen one of his old songs, *Nothing Compares 2 U*, become a global smash for Sinéad O'Connor, but seemed unsure of his own next musical direction.

The Nude Tour was a stripped-back affair (a deliberate move to avoid the bank-breaking excess of 1988's *Lovesexy Tour*) with a setlist comprising his greatest hits, while the *Graffiti Bridge* album was mainly made up of songs he had written in the past and previously consigned to the legendary vault in Paisley Park.

Aside from a handful of tracks, namely the single *Thieves In The Temple* and two great ballads, *The Question Of U* and *Joy In Repetition*, *Graffiti Bridge* didn't live up to Prince's previous work. The rest of the album was either tech-based turkeys, such as *Tick, Tick, Bang*, or a showcase for other artists on Prince's label. The Time were again featured, as the *Graffiti Bridge* film had picked up on their rivalry, as were newcomers Tevin Campbell and Ingrid Chavez, and legendary gospel singer Mavis Staples, who suffered the indignity of being rechristened Melody Cool.

A lot was riding on the *Graffiti Bridge* project. It wasn't just Prince's new music at risk, it was his

legacy, too. Touted as a sequel to *Purple Rain*, *Graffiti Bridge* saw Prince revisiting the pop culture behemoth that had transformed his life and career beyond recognition, and catching up with The Kid, a character so beloved of his army of fans.

Yet when *Rolling Stone*'s Neal Karlen was granted a rare interview during the tour, Prince appeared unmoved as to whether the film was a success or not, putting the prospective success of the film, or lack thereof, down to people "not getting it".

"I can't please everybody," he said. "I didn't want to make *Die Hard 4*. But I'm also not looking to be Francis Ford Coppola. I see this more like those 50s rock'n'roll movies. Maybe it will take people 30 years to get it – they trashed *The Wizard Of Oz* when it first came out, too."

A LOT WAS RIDING ON THE GRAFFITI BRIDGE PROJECT. IT WASN'T JUST PRINCE'S NEW MUSIC AT RISK, IT WAS HIS LEGACY, TOO

Luckily, when *Graffiti Bridge* was released, fans had the nous to distance it from *Purple Rain* and regard it, or rather disregard it, as its own entity.

If anything, it bore

more of a resemblance to *Lovesexy* and its themes of spiritual rebirth than *Purple Rain*.

STAND BY YOUR MOVIE

The album meanwhile, fared better. It received some positive reviews and reached No. 1 on the UK album chart, but the reviews of the film were scathing. The *Washington Post* described it "thoroughly execrable" and suggested it "should be bronzed immediately and delivered to Hollywood's Hall of Shamelessness." The film was a box-office bomb, yet Prince was unrepentant. He stood by the film, describing it as, "one of the purest, most uplifting, spiritual things I've ever done", and wrapped up the tour.

Although the Nude Tour was not in the same league as previous tours, neither logistically nor on the level of spectacle, Prince had learned a lot during the jaunt. As well as building the foundation of his next album, he had also enjoyed working with a

POP UP The *Graffiti Bridge* film was nominated for five Golden Raspberry Awards; Worst Picture, Worst Actor (Prince), Worst Director (Prince), Worst Screenplay (Prince), and Worst New Star (Ingrid Chavez).





Prince singing live in May 1990. After a shaky start to the decade, he released the acclaimed *Diamonds And Pearls* in 1991

On stage at Radio City Music Hall in 1993. It was around this time that he made his famous name-change

band again, not only in a performance scenario but writing too, something he hadn't really done since he disbanded The Revolution. Many of the songs that would appear on his next album came from ideas that had originated during soundchecks and at aftershows.

"You have a few choices when you're in that position," Prince said of how he had handled the fame that *Purple Rain* had afforded him and how it had affected the band. "You can get all jacked up on yourself and curse everybody, or you can say this is the way life is and try to enjoy it. I'm still learning that lesson. I think I'll always be learning that lesson. I was an expert at cutting off people in my life and disappearing without a glance back, never to return. I think I'm a much nicer person now."

A DIFFERENT KIND OF FUNKY

Diamonds And Pearls, released in 1991, and credited to Prince & the New Power Generation, was the sound of a re-energised Prince, a direct result of his new group and the new flavours they brought to his music.

"Everybody else went out and got drum machines and computers, so I threw mine away," said Prince, explaining the album's powerful live sound to *Rolling Stone* magazine. "This band I'm with now is funky. With them, I can drag out *Baby I'm A Star* all night! I just keep switching gears on them, and something else funky will happen. I couldn't do that with the Revolution. They were a different kind of funky, more electronic and cold. The Revolution could tear up *Darling Nikki*, which was the coldest song ever written. But I wouldn't even think about playing that song with this band."

Powerhouse vocalist Rosie Gaines lent soaring vocals and an old-school soul feel to songs such as the title track. Rapper Tony M also made an appearance, which was surprising, given that Prince had voiced his distaste for rap in the past, labelling it "a phase" on the *Black Album*. He'd since denounced a lot of what he said on that infamous bootleg, however, and had become a fan of NWA, Chuck D and Ice Cube.

Released amid a major promo campaign with a hologram cover, a lot of money was spent on *Diamond And Pearls*. Even the usually blasé Prince admitted feeling pressure with the album, because it was his first non-film project since *Lovesexy*. Encompassing a variety of styles, including the gospel funk of *Thunder*, the soulful *Money Don't Matter 2*



Prince and the New Power Generation performing in Oslo

© Photoshot



Prince performing
with guitarist Levi
Seacer Jr in 1993

Night, the breezy *Strollin'*, the Bolan-esque *Cream*, funky *Willing and Able* and the rocky *Live 4 Love*, *Diamonds And Pearls* was Prince's most soulful record since *Sign o' The Times*, not to mention his funkiest. This, along with his embracing rap on cuts such as *Push*, *Jughead* and the innuendo-laden lead single *Gett Off*, did him major favours in the US where his sales had been diminishing for years. *Diamonds and Pearls* reconnected him to an urban audience.

If Prince had been flying under the radar as far as the media was concerned, he returned with a bang with his performance of *Gett Off* at the 1991 MTV Video Music Award. He stole the show with his Roman orgy stage set, wearing a yellow suit with the cheeks cut out while delivering lyrics detailing "23 positions in a one night stand".

The album was a huge success, reaching No. 3 in the US and No. 2 in the UK. It spawned five singles and went on to sell more than six million copies, Prince's biggest sales since *Purple Rain*.

Prince embarked on the *Diamonds And Pearls* Tour in April 1992, visiting Australia, Europe and Asia. It was his biggest tour since *Lovesexy* and the most theatrical, with a sci-fi set, giant test tubes and floating beds. The tight-knit band – featuring new additions the NPG Horns – brought the album to life in the live arena with their punchy new arrangements. While the setlist focused on the *Diamonds and Pearls* album, it also premiered a controversial new song...

Sexy MF was a surprise hit given its provocative lyrics. It was released in the UK in June 1992 to coincide with the UK leg of the tour. The deep funk number only received airplay in a heavily-edited form that placed Prince's trademark scream over the offending line. With an equally racy video that showed Prince in full playboy mode, *Sexy MF* affirmed Prince's newfound braggadocio. Influenced heavily by what was happening in hip-hop, he did

his own take on the guns, girls and bling culture. This included singing into a gun-shaped microphone, having *Dynasty* actress Troy Beyer play his love interest and draping himself entirely in gold, right down to his symbol pendant and a blinged-up cane (with which he would regularly be seen from then on).

After the worldwide success of *Diamonds And Pearls*, Warner Brothers offered Prince an extension to his contract in August 1992. The deal, \$100 million for six more albums, was the biggest deal ever for a solo artist at that time. It was a deal that Prince would come to regret deeply.

SYMBOLIC TIMES

Prince released his 14th album, *Love Symbol*, the following October. Described as a rock opera, the

album once again featured the New Power Generation (minus Rosie Gaines, who had left to pursue a solo career). Although the album principally

draws on the same set of influences as *Diamonds And Pearls*, it has a much more polished feel than its predecessor. On that album, Prince and the band were finding their feet with each other; on *Love Symbol* they had gelled and were tighter than ever.

The album included a range of styles from the theatrical rock of *3 Chains O' Gold* to reggae on *Blue Light*, while the dance scene also had an influence on the techno-infused *The Max*. The choice of *Sexy MF* and *My Name Is Prince* as the first two singles may have lead many to believe that this was Prince's full-on rap album, when in actual fact, *The Flow* and *Arrogance* are the only two tracks fully in that style. The album also housed some of Prince's greatest ballads in *The Morning Papers*, *Damn U*, *Sweet Baby* and *Love 2 The 9's*.

The opera aspect of the album was originally woven together through telephone conversations with a reporter called Vanessa Bartholomew (played

SEXY MF WAS A SURPRISE HIT GIVEN ITS PROVOCATIVE LYRICS. IT ONLY RECEIVED AIRPLAY IN AN EDITED FORM AND HAD AN EQUALLY RACY VIDEO

POP UP Prince achieved three of his five UK No. 1 albums in the 90s: *Graffiti Bridge*, in 1990; *Love Symbol*, in 1992; and finally, *Come*, in 1994.



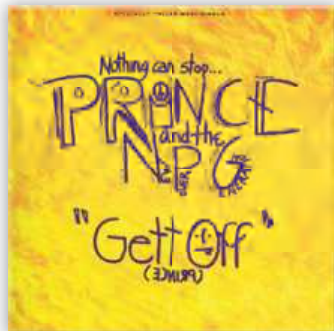


KEY SINGLES 1990 TO 1999

GETT OFF

PAISLEY PARK/WARNER BROS, 1991

Just as he had done for much of the material on the *Graffiti Bridge* album, Prince once again went into Paisley Park's infamous vault to revisit an unfinished track and breathe new life into it. *Gett Off* started as a remix to *Lovesexy's Glam Slam*, before it transformed into the track we know it as today. With his new band in place, Prince added a vocal by Rosie Gaines and a rap from Tony, whose "23 positions in a one night stand" became the song's hook. Prince's scream from the beginning of the song went on to be sampled on House Of Pain's *Jump Around*.



by actress Kirstie Alley), but most of these skits were dumped prior to release to make room on the CD for *I Wanna Melt With U*, making what did survive of the dialogue confusing. The story was told instead with the release of *3 Chains O' Gold*, a video album released early in 1993, and prominently featured belly dancer Mayte Garcia, Prince's new girlfriend.

Despite hitting No. 1 in the UK, sales of *Love Symbol* fell way below those of *Diamonds And Pearls* (just under three million), and was the beginning of a series of serious rows between Prince and his record company, Warner Brothers. They had already clashed over the singles released from the album. Warners wanted to release *7*, an acoustic, Eastern-flavoured track, but Prince got his way and released *My Name Is Prince* instead, a move that many believed killed his album campaign from the offset.

Prince had long had a turbulent relationship with Warner Brothers regarding how much music they permitted him to release. Renowned as one of the most prolific musicians of his time, it was always a bone of contention with Prince that he had only been allowed to release an album a year. Even though his contract had always given him free rein to write and produce for a roster of other artists, it still wasn't enough for him.

CREAM

PAISLEY PARK/WARNER BROS, 1991

Cream was written with the NPG during 1990's Nude Tour – Prince claimed that he had penned it while standing in front of mirror. With its dirty bassline and playfully sexual lyrics – "You've got the horn so why don't you blow it?" and "You're filthy cute and baby you know it" – *Cream* was classic Prince. The song was released as an EP, with different variations of the song as opposed to straightforward remixes. It peaked at No. 15 in the UK but topped the US chart, giving him his final No. 1 single there.



"PROFESSIONAL SLAVERY"

Alongside the *Love Symbol* project, Prince was writing a ballet for Joffrey Ballet, working with director Albert Brooks on the soundtrack to his next film, masterminding the career of his latest protégé Carmen Electra, writing for Martika, devising an interactive CD-ROM and working with rapper Monie Love on her *In A Word Or 2* album. His proclamation in *Rolling Stone* in 1990 that he would "only work on one project at a time" had failed miserably.

The disappointing sales of *Love Symbol* had also reignited Warner Brothers' concerns about how much Prince was spending in comparison to how much he was making. Suddenly, both parties were having serious doubts about their new contract.

While it was given that music videos were an essential promo tool – MTV was at its peak at that time – Prince was making videos for remixes of his singles (*Gett Off*) and for entire albums (*Love Symbol*) that weren't even serviced to music-video stations, let alone played. Prince's cavalier attitude to spending the record company's money did nothing to diffuse the situation. When asked about the pressure to make *Graffiti Bridge* a hit, he had replied that there was no pressure as he had "just made a \$7 million movie with someone else's money".

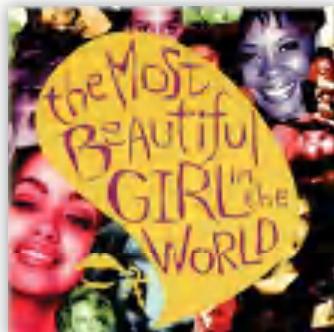
While the battle raged over what Prince could or couldn't release, he went back on the road with the Act I Tour, his first in the US since *Lovesexy* in 1988. The show was divided into two halves, the first a live recreation of the *Love Symbol* rock opera, while the second featured old hits and rare B-sides such as *She's Always In My Hair* and *Irresistible Bitch*.

At the end of the US tour, on 27 April 1993, Prince made the startling announcement that he was retiring from studio recording. He explained that he had hundreds of songs in the vault at Paisley Park and all future releases would comprise material from there. The move shocked the music industry; it was only months since his record-breaking contract. If they thought that was strange, however, they could never have predicted Prince's next move.

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL GIRL IN THE WORLD

NPG, 1994

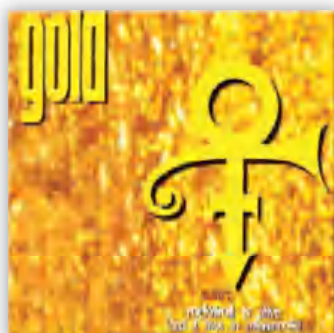
Prince's first single to be released following his name-change was an Al Green-inspired ballad that he had written as a gift for his girlfriend and future wife Mayte Garcia. Released independently on his own label as Prince was "enslaved" to Warners at that point, *The Most Beautiful Girl In The World* became Prince's only UK No. 1 single. As it was released under his Symbol moniker and on his own label, it doesn't appear on any of Prince's hits compilations. During a row with a Warners executive, Prince was told that he didn't have another hit in him. He wrote this the next day.



GOLD

NPG/WARNER BROS, 1995

One of the great lost tracks by Prince, *Gold* was a big hit on its release, reaching the Top 10 in the UK in 1995. Due to the circumstances surrounding its release – different name, label problems – it has been largely forgotten about. An anthemic soft-rock song with a chorus recorded live, it is little wonder that Prince referred to the song as "the new *Purple Rain*". The song's B-side was a riposte to Lenny Kravitz's *Rock And Roll Is Dead* called *Rock 'N' Roll Is Alive (And It Lives In Minneapolis)*.



A full-page photograph of Prince performing on stage. He is wearing a bright blue long-sleeved shirt with a large, stylized white cross on the front, and shiny yellow pants. He has dark hair and is looking down and to his left. His right hand is raised near his neck, and his left hand is extended forward. He is wearing a chunky gold chain necklace and a watch on his left wrist. The background is dark with red and blue stage lights creating a dramatic atmosphere.

At the World Music Awards in Monaco in May 1994, *The Most Beautiful Girl In The World* had been released earlier that year

1 9 9 0 s

The New Power
Generation with Magic
Johnson at the 1991
MTV Video Music
Awards in LA







All that glittered was gold: The Ultimate Live Experience Tour at Wembley Arena

Prince was already lamenting the deal with Warners, describing it as a poisoned chalice. He insisted that the conditions of the contract amounted to professional slavery, though both parties were at fault. Warners had essentially offered a "smoke and mirrors" contract that was unfeasible; under the new contract, Prince was guaranteed a \$10 million advance for each album, but only on the condition that his previous one had shipped five million units – this was the number Warners needed to recoup its advance. *Diamonds And Pearls* had been Prince's biggest hit in seven years, and had just cleared that figure. *Love Symbol* fell short of it by 50 per cent, and Prince realised the impracticalities of his new deal.

As well as the restrictions relating to new material – Warner wanted a longer period between releases so that Prince was not competing with himself in the charts – the label also owned the masters of his entire back catalogue. It was said that Prince's decision to sign the contract had been ego-driven; Madonna and Janet Jackson had signed huge deals and his \$100 million would usurp them, though at what cost he was just discovering.

PRINCE IS DEAD, LONG LIVE ♀

On 7 June 1993, Prince announced that Prince was dead and that from this point, he would only be known as ♀. He claimed that as Warners owned 'Prince' and all of his music, the name was now a commodity owned by them rather than the birth name that he had identified as his.

He reasoned that by changing his name he was no longer contracted to Warners. He would give them six albums' worth of material from the vaults to fulfil the contract – but everything he recorded from this point onwards would belong to ♀ and that they would have no hold over it.

The cost of this bizarre move was incalculable; with the confusion of what to call him, he alienated the music industry, the press and even some fans. He had unwittingly caused irreparable damage to his career, and it would never truly recover. He saw out the remainder of the decade with a series of substandard contract-fulfilling releases or overindulgent sprawling sets with little regard for quality control.

While the craziness behind the scenes ensued, Prince's public presence in the UK had never been bigger. In July, he embarked on his Act II Tour, which included a sold-out show at Wembley Stadium – his biggest ever UK show. After a set that included all of his greatest hits, he revealed he would no longer perform Prince material live.

"Things change," he told *Vibe* magazine. "I don't mind if people are cynical or make jokes – that's part of it – but this is what I choose to be called. You find out quickly who respects and who disrespects you. It took Muhammad Ali years before people stopped calling him Cassius Clay." With the confusion over his name proving unrelenting, he was variably called Symbol, The Artist Formerly Known As Prince, TAFKAP, just The Artist or "Squiggle to my enemies", as he joked during a CNN interview.

While Prince had always resisted releasing a hits compilation on account of it being "the death of an artist", Warner took him at his word that Prince was dead and released *The Hits/The B-Sides* in September 1993, a release that Prince was paid not to have any involvement with. Available separately as *Hits 1* (his more spiritual songs) and *Hits 2* (the sexy songs), ➤



KEY ALBUMS 1990 TO 1999

DIAMONDS AND PEARLS

PAISLEY PARK/WARNER BROS, 1991

Having been dismissive of rap in the past, Prince embraced it with his first proper album of the 90s. Rapper Tony M as a permanent member of the New Power Generation, and he brought a new dimension to Prince's music, as did powerhouse vocalist Rosie Gaines who delivers an incredible vocal on the gorgeously pompous title track. Other highlights were the gospel funk of *Thunder* the funky *Daddy Pop*. *Diamonds And Pearls* was close as Prince got to Prince & The Family Stone, and was his biggest selling album since *Purple Rain*.



LOVE SYMBOL

PAISLEY PARK/WARNER BROS, 1992

Although not nearly as big as its predecessor and lacking the big hits, as a body of work 1992's *Love Symbol* is the stronger album, taking the ideas present on *Diamonds And Pearls* and delivering them in a more polished way. The appalling single choices rendered the album dead on arrival – Prince's own fault for releasing the gimmicky *My Name Is Prince* over the record company's preferred 7. There's plenty to love here, however, especially the ballads. Well worth revisiting.



THE GOLD EXPERIENCE

WARNER/NPG, 1995

Released at the height of Prince's name-change debacle, *The Gold Experience* undoubtedly bore the brunt of the madness and cost Prince what should have been one of his crowning glories. Standouts are the reincarnation-pondering *Dolphin*, the gorgeous *Shhh*, funk-filled *P Control*, anthemic *Gold* plus *Endorphinmachine*, *We March* and the middle-finger-to-the-critics *Billy Jack Bitch*. Even the crisper, slightly remixed *The Most Beautiful Girl In The World* is improved in the context of the album. Long out of print, *The Gold Experience* is the hidden gem of Prince's discography and well worth tracking down if you can find a copy.



EMANCIPATION

NPG/EMI, 1996

The latter half of the 90s was a confusing and an exhausting time to be a Prince fan. As well as the confusion over the name, the release schedule was all over the place. Although there is no doubt that there is a decent album within *Emancipation*, the task of sifting through three CDs' worth of material to find it proved just too overwhelming for most. Far from the celebration Prince planned it to be, *Emancipation* was simply the best of a bad bunch of records released at that time.





KEY VIDEOS 1990 TO 1999

GETT OFF

RANDEE ST NICHOLAS, 1991

After the disappointment of *Graffiti Bridge*, Prince was back to his raunchy best with *Gett Off*, a funk-filled fantasy set in a Caligula-inspired orgy. The video revealed Prince's two new dancers, Diamond and Pearl as they were introduced to Prince and his perverse inner sanctum. Prince also filmed videos for the five remixes of *Gett Off* featured on the maxi-single and sold it as a video single due to a ban on MTV. That didn't stop him recreating an even more outrageous version of the video live at the MTV Awards in 1991, for which he wore his infamous cheek-less trousers.



CREAM

RANDEE ST NICHOLAS, 1991

Photographer Randee St Nicholas played a huge role in Prince's iconography in the 90s, particularly during the *Diamonds And Pearls* era, when her videos and images perfectly captured his "gangster glam". *Cream* begins with a tongue-in-cheek skit in Grand Central Station in which scores of women are desperate to follow Prince to Minneapolis. Prince, with Diamond and Pearl in tow, escapes the hordes and delivers a blistering performance with the New Power Generation and a bevy of lingerie-clad dancers.



3 CHAINS O' GOLD

PARRIS PATTON, RANDEE ST NICHOLAS, PAISLEY PARK, 1994

Essentially a video album of the *Love Symbol* album, *3 Chains O' Gold* has a narrative of Princess Mayte's father being murdered by assassins trying to obtain the precious 3 Chains O' Gold. Believing only Prince can protect them, she goes to find him, only to fall in love with him. It's every bit as bonkers as it sounds, but it's beautifully shot, the music is great and Prince looks incredible in it. It was only ever released on VHS because of the financial disaster that *Graffiti Bridge* proved to be, but Prince wrote the album as a rock opera, and this is the visual representation of that.



LOVE SIGN (FEAT. NONA GAYE)

ICE CUBE, 1994

This song was released on his *1-800 NEW FUNK* compilation, and featured vocals from his then-girlfriend Nona Gaye. The video for the song saw Nona, dressed in a red leather catsuit as a hitwoman deployed to get rid of Prince. When she gets to Prince, naturally she finds him irresistible and ends up succumbing to his charms. Instilling an anti-gun message, the video ends with Nona handing in her gun to the police as part of a 'Guns For Tickets' initiative.



they were also packaged together to include a third disc of B-sides, which in Prince's case, were renowned for being high quality.

The release also featured a handful of previously unreleased songs such as *Pink Cashmere*, *Pope*, *Power Fantastic*, *Peach*, his Live Aid contribution *4 The Tears In Your Eyes* and a fantastic duet of *Nothing Compares 2 U* performed live with Rosie Gaines.

Continuing his crusade against his record label, Prince rarely appeared in public without the word *Slave* scrawled on his cheek to bring attention to his fight. He said that he was looking at new ways to release his music, such as internet downloads, interactive "experiences", giving away music at concerts or debuting it during live shows.

Inspired by having written his rock opera and a ballet, Prince devised a production based on Homer's *Odyssey* called *Glam Slam Ulysses*, which starred Carmen Electra and was held at his Glam Slam nightclub in LA. The show marked the debut of 13 new tracks, which would surface at various points over the next few years.

He also set up his own label, NPG Records, and released the New Power Generation-credited album *GoldNigga*. "This band is just beginning to play to its strength," he said. "The Lovesexy band was about musicality, a willingness to take risks. Since then, I've been thinking too much. This band is about funk, so I've learned to get out of the way and let that be the sound, the look, the style, everything."

MOST BEAUTIFUL GIRL IN THE WORLD

While his ongoing battle with Warners continued to be an endless source of frustration, Prince's personal life was providing him with security. His relationship with Mayte was going from strength to strength, and she became a tower of strength for him while his battles raged on.

Mayte's mother had sent Prince a video of her daughter belly dancing, and the two met in Germany in 1990 while Prince was on tour. They kept in contact and Mayte was hired as a dancer on the *Diamonds and Pearls* Tour in 1992. She was his muse for the *Love Symbol* opera and starred in the film before joining the *Act I/II* Tour as a dancer in 1993, during which they began dating.

In February 1994, Prince released *The Most Beautiful Girl In The World*, a song he had written for Mayte as a gift. Prince was desperate for *The Gold Experience* to be released so that he could tour it, but Warners refused because the *Hits* albums were still doing well. A compromise was reached and they allowed Prince to release the song independently, provided he paid for it, which he did.

The soulful ballad, with Prince (or ♫ as it was credited to) singing in falsetto as an homage to Al Green, was an instant hit, reaching the Top 10 in the US and giving him his first – and only – UK No. 1 single. Despite having his first No. 1 single under his belt, Prince was still struggling financially, so he opened a shop in Camden, which sold a host of ♫ emblazoned merchandise – from clothing and posters to cushions and candles.

Confusingly for fans, when the new Prince album, *Come*, was released the following August, the song was nowhere to be found. The reason for this was that *Come* was a Warners/Prince release and *The Most Beautiful Girl In The World* was credited to The Artist Formerly Known As Prince.



By 1997, The Artist Formerly Known As Prince had severed his ties with Warner

Performing
at Shoreline
Amphitheater in
California in 1997



Instead, *Come* mainly comprised tracks that had been heard in *The Beautiful Experience* – a TV special he produced, or as part of the *Glam Slam Ulysses* show. Prince approached Warners about releasing *Come* (credited to Prince) simultaneously with *The Gold Experience* (credited to \otimes), as a companion piece, as the songs originated during the same period, but the label refused, fearing the marketplace would be flooded.

Come, a 10-track collection of one-word titles was credited to 'Prince 1958-1993', signalling the official death of Prince. Fans weren't ready for such a prospect and the album was his lowest-selling to date. The campaign was swiftly shelved after *Letitgo* was released as a single. The album's highlights included the title track, which featured the NPG Horns in full flow, *Space* and *Pheromone*. The album's final track, *Orgasm*, two minutes of a woman groaning as waves crashed in the background, was beyond parody. Credited as 'She Knows' on the cover, it was later revealed to be a sample of Vanity from a demo of the song *Vibrator* from 1982.

GOLD IS THE NEW PURPLE

In March 1995, Prince hit the road again. Billed as 'The Ultimate Live Experience', this tour became pivotal in his efforts to get *The Gold Experience* album released. A separate album credited to the New Power Generation, *Exodus*, was also released. Most of the tracks, including the single *Get Wild*, featured Prince, now hiding behind the moniker of Tora Tora.

He gave his first British TV interview to BBC Two's *The Sunday Show*, a typically odd affair in which his face was completely covered by a scarf and the interviewer had to pose the questions to Mayte, to whom 'Tora Tora' then whispered the answers for her to relay to the interviewer. It was the kind of appearance that earned him headlines, but little sympathy for his cause.

The Ultimate Live Experience shows were some of the most electrifying of his entire career, despite the audience knowing just a handful of songs – those featured on the NPG's *Exodus* album. The remainder of the setlist was drawn from the still unreleased *The Gold Experience*. "I got a whole new mindset when I became \otimes ," he told *NME*. "I can't explain how I feel now compared to then. I don't want to destroy the



The New Power Generation in 1998, around the time of the *Newpower Soul* album

mystique by revealing everything. And if people come to see me just to hear *Purple Rain* then I'm sorry. I'm playing these ♫ songs now."

The Gold Experience was finally released in September 1995 to serious critical acclaim, with many hailing it as his strongest material since *Sign O' The Times*. At a time when the words 'return to form' were frequently overused, *The Gold Experience* was very much worthy of them. The jaunty *Dolphin*, *Endorphinmachine*, *P Control*, *Shy*, *319*, *Shhh*, *We March*, the biting *Billy Jack Bitch* and the stunning *Gold* all evoked former glories and were worthy additions to his imperial phase output. The album reached No. 4 in the UK. Prince had always written "May U live 2 C the Dawn" on his albums; this one said "Welcome 2 the Dawn".

Having finally released the album, Prince continued his celebrations by marrying Mayte in February 1996, in a small private ceremony at Paisley Park attended by family and close friends. Mayte fell pregnant and their son, Boy Gregory, was born on 16 October, 1996.

However, tragedy struck when their son was born with Pfeiffer Syndrome, a rare skull defect, and died just a week after his birth. Devastated and in shock with grief, Prince and Mayte proceeded with a scheduled TV interview with Oprah Winfrey, in which they talked as though their son were still alive.

RAVE UN2 THE NEW MILLENNIUM

Blighted by despair, Prince released *Emancipation*, his first album since severing ties with Warners in November 1996. It was sprawling three-disc affair. Prince explained that there was so much music because he had been saving it up, not caring that Warners was also still releasing material that he had no regard for.

Chaos And Disorder, was Warners' final album of new Prince music, released without fanfare to fulfil

their contract with him. Feeling free and rejuvenated, Prince said that his only competition was "myself in the past". *Emancipation* was a moderate success, if a disappointment after the excellent *Gold Experience*.

Having delivered such a large volume of music at once and settled his scores, Prince took a back seat for the remainder of the decade. Thanks to his old label, however, there was no shortage of Prince products, be it the soundtrack to Spike Lee's *Girl 6* movie, or the next instalments of outtakes from the vault, *Old Friends 4 Sale* and *Crystal Ball*, the latter packaged with *The Truth*, a superb acoustic album and the closest there is to a Prince unplugged album.

"I'm one of the most bootlegged artists out there," he explained of the multiple releases to CNN. "By releasing them officially, it gives me the chance to get the good mixes out there, clean those songs up and let people hear them the way they were supposed to sound. It's the best way to handle it."

Naturally, he kept busy in the studio, writing and producing for his friend and mentor, bassist Larry Graham, and Chaka Khan before returning to work on his own material or a new NPG album *Newpower Soul*. Having signed a one-album deal with Arista records, Prince assembled a team of collaborators including Gwen Stefani and Sheryl Crow, for his poppiest material in years and his final material released as ♫.

Rave Un2 The Joy Fantastic was released in November 1999, just in time for Prince to promote it with a Pay Per View concert recorded at Paisley Park in December. The concert, called *Rave Un2 The Year 2000*, was broadcast at the stroke of midnight on New Year's Eve. Prince had received a multitude of requests to perform his millennial anthem, and although many of his fans were doubtful that he'd play it, play it, he did. And when the clock struck midnight, the contract with Warners had ended. Prince was coming back. ■

THE ULTIMATE LIVE EXPERIENCE SHOWS WERE SOME OF HIS MOST ELECTRIFYING, DESPITE THE AUDIENCE KNOWING JUST A FEW SONGS

POP_UP Special guests for *Rave Un2 The Year 2000* included Rosie Gaines, Morris Day, funk legend Maceo Parker, George Clinton, The Family Stone bass player Larry Graham and Lenny Kravitz.





WOMEN NOT GIRLS RULE MY WORLD

PRINCE'S PATH TO SUPERSTARDOM WAS SUPPORTED
ALONG THE WAY BY HIS PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL
RELATIONSHIPS WITH A NUMBER OF WOMEN

ANDY PRICE

An undeniable facet of what made Prince so hugely revered was his sexual ambiguity, whether manifested in his visually striking image or in his lyrics, which often placed Prince as a non-threatening sexual being, pushing for the female to assert dominance over him.

Perhaps this element of the Prince puzzle is best understood by looking in greater detail at his relationship with women, and how women made Prince reassess his own masculinity, leading him to create a stage persona that challenged the many conventional norms of American popular music.

MAYBE I'M JUST LIKE MY MOTHER

An endearing characteristic of all Prince's relationships with women is how closely tied the vast majority of them are with music. Prince's first major female relationship, and perhaps the most important of his entire life, was the one with his mother, Mattie Della Shaw, who herself was a former jazz singer. Despite an all-pervading myth that Prince's parents were mixed race, both his parents were African American, although they did have a distant mixed-race heritage.

Shaw met Prince's keyboard-playing father, John L. Nelson, at a local Minneapolis Jazz show in 1956. Nelson, who went by the stage name of 'Prince Rogers', was taken by Shaw's vocal dexterity. They quickly became friends; she soon became the lead vocalist of Nelson's band, called The Prince Rogers Trio.

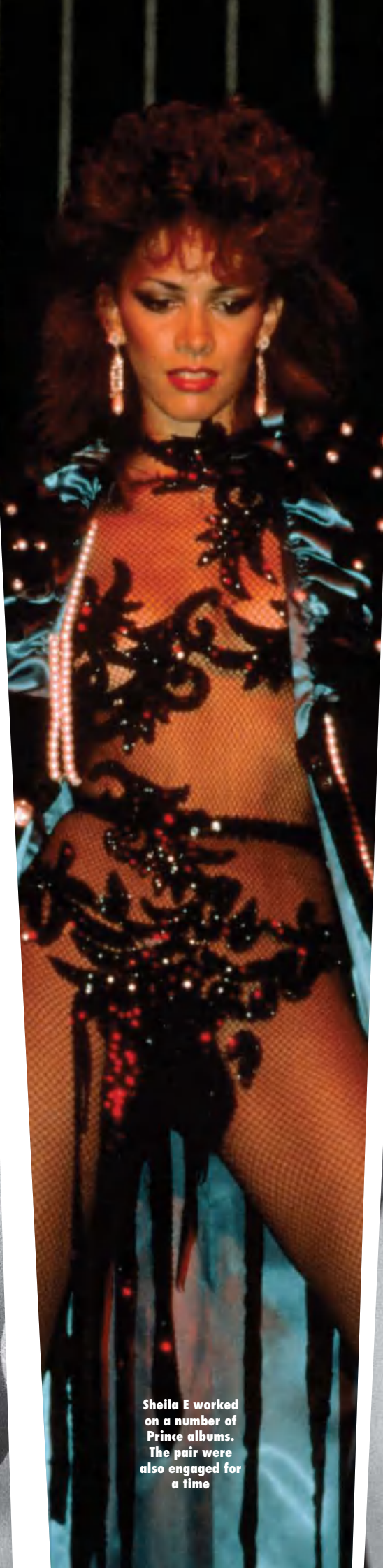
Though Nelson was 16 years older than Mattie, the two's musical partnership evolved into a relationship and eventually they married. Shortly after their marriage Mattie gave birth to a boy who they decided to name Prince – a reference to his father's stage name. Nelson later revealed in the book *Possessed: The Rise And Fall Of Prince*: "I named my son Prince because I wanted him to do everything I wanted to do."

However, it was his fraught relationship with his mother that would arguably exert a greater influence on the man Prince was to become. Shortly after Prince's 10th birthday, Mattie and John divorced, leaving Prince and his younger sister Tyka to flit between the warring ex-spouses. Prince would later reflect on his mother negatively, believing that she had in many ways 'abandoned' him, particularly when she took up residence with new boyfriend Hayward Baker, with whom she had a son named Omarr and later married. Prince would see his mother fleetingly throughout his teenage years and early 20s, disliking her new relationship intensely.

In an interview with *Vanity Fair* in 1998, Prince reflected on his mother's attitude towards him after the remarriage: "Shortly after my mother remarried she had to teach me about the birds and the bees. And I've never asked her about this, but I think there was some sort of plan to initiate me heavy and quick. I was given *Playboy* magazine, and there was erotic



Wendy Melvoin performs with Prince & The Revolution at Ahoy, Rotterdam in August 1986



Sheila E worked on a number of Prince albums. The pair were also engaged for a time



Vanity (Denise Matthews) on stage with Vanity 6 at The Ritz in New York in October 1982

Sinead O'Connor covered one of Prince's songs, but their relationship was not a harmonious one



NOTHING COMPARES

Because Prince often took a gender-neutral role in the lyrics of his songs, it required little effort for him to write for women or for female artists to cover his work. Perhaps the most famous example of this is Sinead O'Connor's emotive cover of *Nothing Compares 2 U*.

Although the song was written by Prince following a spat between him and then-lover Susannah Melvoin, O'Connor's version was suitably different and more haunting. Apparently, Prince was less than happy with O'Connor's cover and a meeting at Prince's house following the single's release ended in physical violence. According to O'Connor in an interview with the *Independent*: "He said he didn't like me saying bad words in interviews. So I told him to f**k off. He got quite violent. I had to escape out of his house at five in the morning."

Prince's material was also covered by luminaries such as Cyndi Lauper (who's version of *When You Were Mine* took on a new energetic life) and Chaka Khan, with whom Prince wrote *I Feel For You*, revitalising her career. He collaborated on Sheena Easton hits *U Got The Look* and *Sugar Walls*, too. The Bangles' debut hit *Manic Monday* was a Prince composition, originally written for Apollonia 6. He allegedly offered it to The Bangles so lead vocalist Susanna Hoffs would sleep with him!

literature laying around. It was very easily picked up. It was pretty heavy at the time. I think it really affected my sexuality a great deal."

Though the musical kinship Prince felt with his father directly affected his choice of career, the distant, out-of-reach yet vital maternally supportive figure of his mother seemed to invade his psyche more, imbuing him with a voracious appetite for female company, in a working context and in his private life. He'd later reflect on this period of his life artistically in the film *Purple Rain* and reference the pivotal relationship with his mother in the classic song *When Doves Cry*. Many believe it was her death in 2002 that was the driving force behind his later conversion to the Jehovah's Witness faith.

Although his relationship with his mother would get increasingly frostier, especially post-fame, Prince's relationship with his sibling Tyka would remain very close. Learning music together from their parents at a very young age, both Prince and Tyka pursued individual music careers and remained supportive of each other's efforts. Tyka would, in the course of her own career, release six albums without the aid of Prince, although he came to her help following a battle with drug addiction and remained very close to her as a veritable revolving door of other women came and went from his life.

THE SEXUAL REVOLUTION

Prince's early bands and music outfits had their fair share of female members. Gayle Chapman was the keyboard player of Prince's immediate pre-fame version of what would become the sexually and racially diverse band The Revolution. Prince referred to Chapman as "the funkiest white chick I've ever met". However, despite an initially creatively fruitful relationship, life on the road with the soon-to-be-superstar caused Chapman to become disenfranchised with just how sexually charged the lyrics of the songs that Prince was asking her to perform were.

In an interview with website *Beautiful Nights*, Chapman (a lifelong Christian) revealed that performing songs that made up Prince's critically revered (but shockingly provocative) 1980 album *Dirty Mind* made her feel ill at ease with the new, more sexual, figure that Prince had become. When he made her kiss him on stage during performances of the not-even-subtle song *Head*, Chapman decided to leave. Chapman told *Beautiful Minds*: "[People] always ask me, 'Did you leave, because, of *Dirty Mind*? I'd like to roll my eyes and say 'No, it wasn't my dirty mind, it was his.' Yes, I did tell him that I did not want to sing the song *Head*. I don't know if it was the mother instinct, because, it didn't feel like that. But I wasn't growing. I needed more. I just knew I had to go."

Prince's relationship with Chapman's successor, Lisa Coleman, would span a much longer timeframe. As Prince's star ascended and he became a world-famous pop icon at the height of the MTV generation, Coleman was an able accomplice both on the road and in the studio. She first worked with Prince on his fourth studio LP, *Controversy*, and then worked on many of his most important works, including *Purple Rain*.

A few short years after joining The Revolution, Coleman recommended that Prince recruit her friend and occasional lover Wendy Melvoin to take on guitar duties after original guitar player Dez Dickerson left. In an interview with *Out* magazine, Coleman recalls how happy she was at Prince's decision to take her on. "[me and Wendy] are chained together. We're shackled.



Prince and Mayte Garcia in 1995. The pair would later marry

No, I love Wendy. We've known each other our entire lives, practically. Once she was finally hired into Prince's band, it was like a dream for me. I had fallen in love with Wendy, my childhood friend, and suddenly we were looking at each other differently, but I had to [be] on the road all the time. It was always just torture. Finally, Prince met Wendy and there was some trouble with the other guitar player, and providence moved in such a way that Wendy ended up on the road with us."

Prince was pleased that he had (what appeared to be) a lesbian couple in his musical ensemble. Back in the mid-80s this was a progressive, political statement, which established him as a champion of the LGBT community. Juxtaposed with his own increasingly androgynous image and sexually provocative

MELVOIN AND COLEMAN PUSHED PRINCE'S MUSIC IN NEW DIRECTIONS AND BECAME A CREATIVE RESOURCE

lyrics, Prince's aesthetic was now open to a lot of interpretation, underlined by the appearance of the three of them on the cover of *Rolling Stone* in 1986, with the caption 'Prince's Women'. But Melvoin and Coleman weren't just for show; the talented pair pushed Prince's music in new directions and they became a

powerful creative resource that Prince nurtured, helping to craft many of the tracks that made up the critically beloved *Purple Rain* LP

In the same interview with *Out*, Wendy Melvoin recalled how Prince used their relationship to provoke. "I think Prince saw us as the couple that we were and used that relationship to add more mystery to him," she said. "I think Lisa and I were willing to go there because at that time we felt mysterious. We were young and it was the thing, so we went with it, not knowing what the result of that would mean or imply later in life. We didn't think about it in those terms." Later, when asked about Prince's own sexuality, Lisa revealed: "He's a girl, for sure, but he's not gay. He looked at me like a gay woman would look at another woman."

Following their tenure working with Prince, Coleman and Melvoin embarked on a prolific career in the music industry in their own right. As a duo dubbed simply Wendy & Lisa, the two would release five studio albums and create incredible soundtracks to high profile movies and TV shows including *Heroes* and *Crossing Jordan*. Reflecting on their time with Prince, Lisa told the *Guardian*: "The three of us really had a special relationship... He's like a brother to me. We did things that only happen in your dreams, they were some of the best times of my life. He's such a talented person."

Prince also worked with Wendy's twin sister, Susannah Melvoin, initially as a vocalist with the ever-growing side project The Family, but before long, the relationship turned romantic and the two became engaged. However, the relationship eventually became increasingly turbulent and crumbled. Prince wrote the song *Nothing Compares 2 U* about his relationship with Susannah.



Wendy Melvoin and Lisa Coleman, aka Wendy & Lisa, circa 2000



Prince live in New York on the *Dirty Mind* Tour in 1981

I'M NOT A WOMAN, I'M NOT A MAN

Despite the string of heterosexual relationships that Prince engaged in, there was always a great deal of speculation regarding his sexuality; particularly because of his feminised image on and off stage and the ambiguity contained within in his lyrics. Although he championed LGBT causes and worked with lesbian duo Wendy & Lisa, his own dalliances with homosexuality were either kept very secret or non-existent.

In later life, following his conversion to the Jehovah's Witness faith Prince took a more conservative approach to sexuality, in line with the traditional views of his faith. He vaguely revealed in a contentious interview with *The New Yorker* following his conversion that "God came to earth and saw people sticking it wherever and doing it with whatever, and he just cleared it all out. He was, like, 'Enough'."

Many felt betrayed by this sea change in attitude. Regardless, Prince had done enough with his earlier work and persona to be elevated to the status of an LGBT icon. Gay R&B singer Frank Ocean said: "He made me feel more comfortable with how I identify sexually, simply by his display of freedom from and irreverence for obviously archaic ideas like gender conformity."



THE GLAMOROUS LIFE

Another important fixture in both Prince's musical and personal life was Sheila E, a vocalist and Latin-jazz percussionist with whom Prince became enamoured with after seeing her perform in 1978.

After the show he told her that he and his bassist had been "fighting over which one of us would be the first to be your husband" and the then-unknown artist promised her an eventual slot in his band. Sheila E and Prince remained in touch and spoke often, even as Prince ascended to superstardom.

It wasn't until the *Purple Rain* recording sessions that Prince made good on his old promise, however. He brought Sheila E into the then tight-knit fold of The Revolution, and she provided vocals for the *Let's Go Crazy* B-side *Erotic City*. It was the beginning of another close working relationship for the musician.

For the next few years, Prince served as an experienced mentor and creative director, and helped Sheila E's musical career get off the ground. He also helped her to write her first hit *The Glamorous Life*. She'd later help Prince during the era that comprised the albums *Sign O' The Times*, *Black Album* and *Lovesexy*. Sheila served as bandleader and bona fide musical director – Prince trusted her professional judgement. The Revolution was dead but under Sheila E's funk-led direction, what would become The New Power Generation was born. Sheila E's relationship with Prince was later revealed to be more than just musically oriented. In her autobiography, *The Beat Of My Own Drum*, she revealed that at one point the two had become engaged. Like his earlier engagement with Susannah Melvoin, it later fizzled out. But the two would remain friends even after they went their separate ways musically.

This mentor/protégé relationship was one that Prince replicated with many others. He formed the pop group Vanity 6 and composed all the music that made up their first album, while also establishing a sexual relationship with lead singer Vanity Matthews. The relationship didn't last long, however, and she was – rather unceremoniously – replaced by another talented young performer, Apollonia. Vanity 6 was hastily re-christened Apollonia 6.

Apollonia also appeared in the film *Purple Rain*, in a role that had originally been written for Vanity. Learning



from his mistakes with Vanity, he didn't engage in any kind of sexual relationship with the then-married Apollonia and instead focused his attentions on developing her as an artist. Yet their relationship was intentionally left ambiguous to the music press and her marriage was kept secret. Prince soon became frustrated with Apollonia's vocal limitations and ditched the project.

Prince also helped to launch the career of Carmen Electra, whom he also 'named'. She remembers meeting Prince

when she was a dancer and singer named Tara Leigh Patrick, auditioning for another of Prince's all-girl outfits. Although she didn't get the gig she remembered in an interview with OWN that she "received a call from Prince saying, 'I think you should be your own artist and not back up anyone else. I'm going to write you a song, and if you like it, you can record it'. The name of the song was *Carmen On Top*. My name is Tara, so I was confused. I loved the song. I loved it, but he said, 'You're not a Tara. You're not Tara. You're Carmen.'"

Prince then took on a guiding role in shaping the career of the young Carmen Electra. The two became inseparable and a relationship followed; Electra remembered how it quickly dissolved: "I told him I wanted to live in LA and he spent as much time here as he did in Minnesota. He wanted me to move back to Minnesota and I said no. I broke it off with him and stayed in LA. I gave up everything with him to live here and make my own career. It was a hard time. I ended up calling him and he hired me to dance at his club in LA. I made \$90 a week. I wasn't his girlfriend anymore, but I was one of his girls."

WHEN DOVES CRY

Like the aforementioned relationships with his creative collaborators, the rest of the story of Prince's love life is unconventional. He married one of his long standing dancers – Puerto Rican Mayte Garcia, the subject of *The Most Beautiful Girl In The World* – in a ceremony that was akin to a stage show. Garcia wore a dress designed by Prince's wardrobe director Bonnie Flesland

and herself and held a necklace shaped like Prince's unpronounceable symbol.

Shortly after their nuptials, Garcia became pregnant with their son, Boy Gregory. There were complications, however, and Boy Gregory died a week after his birth. The emotional turmoil put pressure on the relationship and when Mayte suffered a second miscarriage, she and Prince divorced.

Mayte revealed how scarring this period in her life was in an interview with *The Mirror*: "To lose two babies is really scary... it really caught on me emotionally, physically, everything. It took me at least 15 years to get over it and still, to this day, I miss my son. I believe a child dying between a couple either makes you stronger or it doesn't. For me, it was very, very hard to move forward and for us as a couple, I think it probably broke us." She also revealed that in the years since their marriage ended, there was no animosity or bad blood: "He was my husband and the father of my child. So although I am not actively in love with him, I will always love him – he's a great guy."

It wasn't long before Prince married again, to 24-year-old Manuela Testolini, a worker in his charitable foundation. This was another short-lived union that lasted just five years.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE BEAUTIFUL

In later years, Prince employed the services of musical outfit 3rdeyegirl. The group consisted of Hannah Welton, Donna Grantis and Ida Kristine Nielsen, three powerful, rocking musicians who added a masculinity

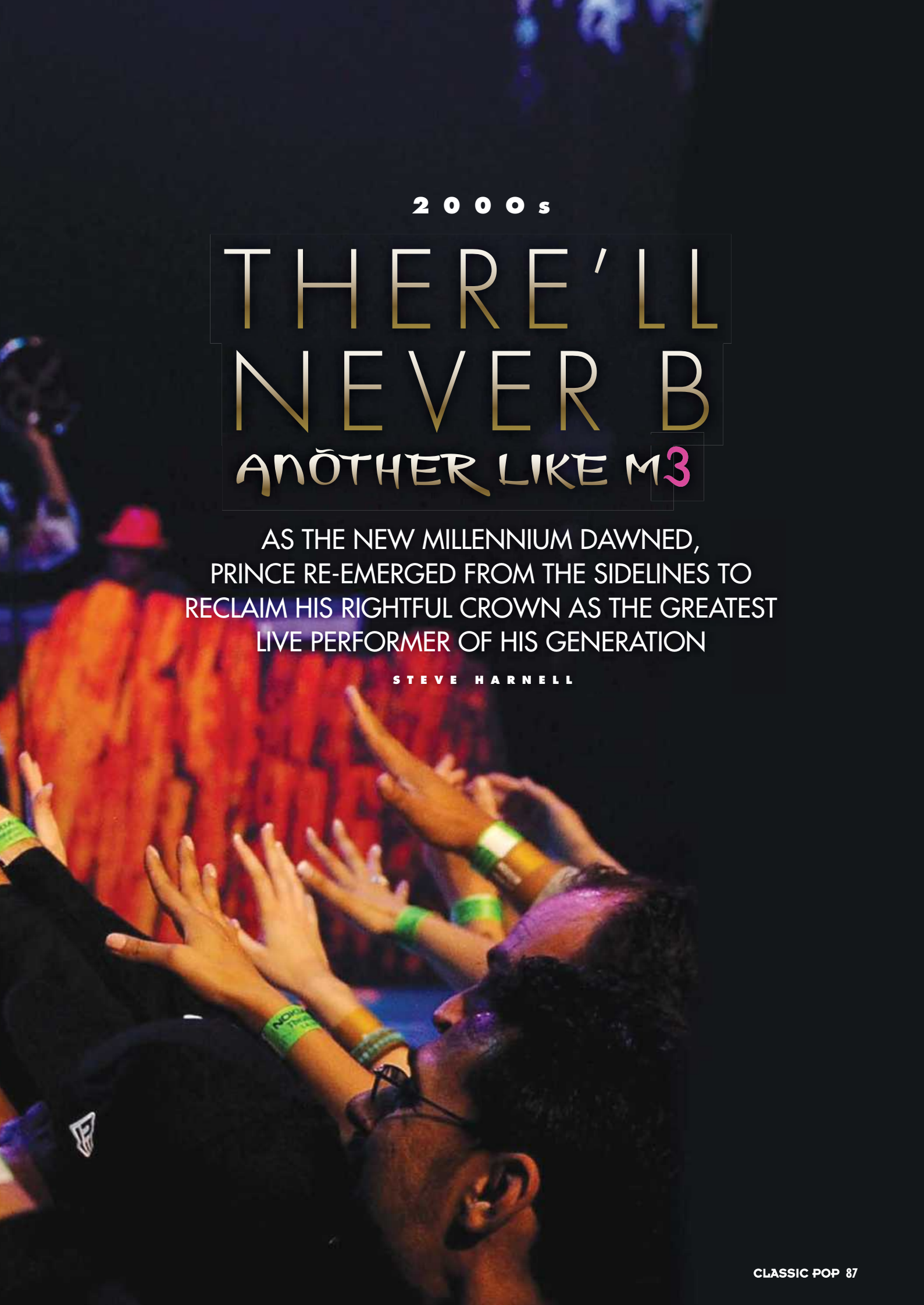
and rough edge to the effeminate Prince's stage presence, furthering his experimentation with gender-roles in pop music.

3RDEYEGIRL WERE POWERFUL, ROCKING MUSICIANS WHO ADDED A ROUGH EDGE TO PRINCE'S STAGE PRESENCE

Throughout his life, Prince chose to fixate himself on a wide range of women, romantically, professionally and psychologically. His stage persona, self-designed symbol and the lyrical focus of the vast majority of his work pointed to an artist who saw himself between genders. Though he was undoubtedly straight in a sexual sense, it was his empowerment of females and his blurring of the boundaries between genders that helped to solidify Prince as someone who was not afraid to be different, and making him a potent figure in this history of music. ■







2000s

THERE'LL NEVER BE ANOTHER LIKE M³

AS THE NEW MILLENNIUM DAWNED,
PRINCE RE-EMERGED FROM THE SIDELINES TO
RECLAIM HIS RIGHTFUL CROWN AS THE GREATEST
LIVE PERFORMER OF HIS GENERATION

STEVE HARNELL



Resplendent in red at the 10th Anniversary Essence Music Festival at the Superdome in 2004

THERE

was an artist whose career was run defiantly on his own terms. He played the long game, unafraid of digging his heels in to stand by his principles, even if it meant commercial suicide. Quixotic, stubborn, petulant even, some of Prince's business decisions may have seemed absurd and self-destructive to outsiders, but they were driven by the fundamental belief that the singer clung to resolutely throughout his life – that musicians should be free of record-company control and always deserved to be paid for their work.

At best, Prince viewed his industry paymasters as a necessary evil. He was continually searching for ways to cut out those he viewed as meddling middlemen cashing in on his talent.

As with George Michael's acrimonious legal battle with Sony in the mid-1990s, Prince's fight with Warner/Chappell had almost torpedoed his

career. But as his publishing contract with the record company lapsed, the star made an announcement that would prompt a collective sigh of relief from his fans across the globe. As of 16 May 2000, he would return to his birth name. 'The Artist Formerly Known as Prince' was no more. Prince, plain and simple, was back in business.

He spoke at a press conference in New York to mark the name change, where it was clear that bitterness and anger about the record company dispute was still very much at the forefront of his mind. He told the assembled throng: "I always get journalists saying to me: 'You don't sell as many records as you used to.' I always tell them, 'I don't sell the records, I only make 'em. You gotta talk to the accountant firm about that.'"

"I think my old record contract was unlawful. The moment other artists get together and challenge [their

recording companies], the contracts are going to go right out of the window."

MY NAME IS PRINCE (ONCE AGAIN)

After a time in the shadows – literally as well as metaphorically, as he adopted ever-more elaborate ways to shield his identity in public – Prince was now keen for fans to take a peek into his inner sanctum where the magic happened: "People who supported my music over the years never got to look inside Paisley Park if they didn't see any film of it, and a lot of changes have happened there recently. It's now a more public-friendly place. I'd like for them to see what they helped to create."

He also showed his social conscience – with a little eccentricity thrown in for good measure. "I want to build a food facility right next to Paisley Park in the shape of an egg so the people in our community and those who work for me get food from this place for free. These are meals designed for families. That

means they don't have to go to the grocery store, all of their food bills are taken care of. If you take money out of the equation in people's lives, it's interesting what happens."

To the delight of the assembled press (and Prince himself, who declared it his favourite question of the day), one interviewer cut to the chase and asked if Prince was "trying to change the public's perception of him and come across as a little less weird".

"I've never thought of myself as weird," the singer said. "And the people who really know me don't think so, either. Everybody has their own perception about me and my music, but if you really put everything back-to-back in a linear fashion, you'll see that *The Greatest Romance* is saying the same thing as *P Control* or *Sexy MF*. What people get out of it, is what they get out of it. What I got out of the music business was that if you don't own your masters, ►

"JOURNALISTS SAY, 'YOU DON'T SELL AS MANY RECORDS AS YOU USED TO'. I TELL THEM, 'I DON'T SELL THE RECORDS, I ONLY MAKE 'EM'"

POP UP Foo Fighters drummer Taylor Hawkins was unsure what to make of Prince's cover of the band's *Best Of You*. "Maybe he was doing it as a sort of 'f*ck you' to us," he said. "Or maybe he really likes the song."





When Prince met the Queen Bee: his performance with Beyoncé at the 2004 Grammy Awards was a defining moment



Prince and his wife
Manuela Testolini
attending the 2004
Academy Awards at
the Kodak Theater
in Hollywood



In 2005, Prince played a set at the 36th NAACP Image Awards in Los Angeles

your masters own you. Some people just find fame and fortune and they're cool with that, but I'd like to see an alternate system. There's no way right now that an artist can be seen or heard until someone who was not part of the creation of the music gets paid. That's just absurd."

Prince still had plenty of material in the can and the steady flow out of Paisley Park showed no signs of drying up. As he told the press conference: "What we are seriously considering is, because I play so many different styles of music, maybe putting out numerous records during the year. Rather than trying to put so many styles on the same album, I'd then have a jazz record then a ballad record. I could do so many wonderful marketing things with my own music if I had complete control over it. That's what I have been fighting for over all these years, and will continue [to fight] until the battle is won."

The reversion back to Prince was a sensible move. Records sales were now less than stellar and his reputation as a Howard

Hughes-style eccentric was doing him a disservice. As with his musical rival Michael Jackson, tales of his odd whims and lavish lifestyle were taking up column inches in the tabloids, to the detriment of his art.

However, the famous love symbol was not gone for good. It still appeared on album covers and throughout Paisley Park. Prince also used striking symbol-shaped guitars on stage for years to come.

NPG MUSIC CLUB

Despite moving on from the 'Slave' saga, Prince's view of record companies was essentially unchanged. He steadfastly refused to adopt that old business model and was convinced there were superior and more efficient ways to serve up his music.

Private performances at Paisley Park took up the majority of 2000 until the Hit N Run Tour at the end of the year. The hit-laden show was a brazen attempt

at crowd-pleasing, but Prince's bitterness towards the record industry still wriggled to the surface. His stage announcements often descended into hectoring; he told audience members who were not 'self employed' that they were all effectively slaves.

New albums from the star were now to be released through his own internet subscription service NPGOnline Ltd (later NPGMusicClub.com). Opening in February 2001, with a \$7 monthly subscription fee, basic membership entitled users to a minimum of three fresh New Power Generation songs each month, accompanied by a music video. Subscribers were also promised a free one-hour radio show hosted by members of the group, including Prince himself. For \$100 a year, Premium Annual Membership ramped up the benefits to include top-class gig seats as well as VIP passes to all aftershow gigs and parties plus a free copy of remix album *Rave In2 The Joy Fantastic*.

On paper, the deal looked great, but the website was hamstrung by technical difficulties with its ticketing

section as well as Prince's inability to serve up the much-vaunted exclusive material to a deadline. When fans got restless, Prince slashed the fees to \$2.50 a month with a lifetime membership set at just \$25.

Although the website had its faults, it was still testament to Prince's ongoing desire to change the traditional relationship between artist and fan. By cutting out the record company middleman, he felt more connected to his fanbase. It was undoubtedly an inspiration to Radiohead in later years, when they launched their 2007 album *In Rainbows*.

Prince's unique relationship with his fans was further refined by invitations for NPG Music Club members to studio tours, pre-concert soundchecks, listening sessions and yearly celebrations at Paisley Park.

In the first few years of the 00s, Prince still produced albums at a prolific rate – an average of one per year. Now without major-label backup,

"AN ARTIST CANNOT BE SEEN OR HEARD UNTIL SOMEONE WHO WAS NOT PART OF THE CREATION OF THE MUSIC GETS PAID"

POP_UP Amy Winehouse appeared as a special guest during Prince's run of O2 gigs. When she left the stage after a duet of her *Love Is A Losing Game*, Prince told the crowd: "I got tears... I'm gonna have to get my shades on."







BETTER WITH TIME

KEY ALBUMS 2000 TO 2009

MUSICOLOGY

NPG/COLUMBIA, 2004

Musicology, the Purple One's most commercially successful LP since *Diamonds And Pearls*, found him reining in his indulgences. The songcraft was more disciplined and the grooves funkier. It wasn't without its off-kilter moments, though. *Illusion*, *Coma*, *Pimp & Circumstance* finds Prince revisiting his high-pitched feminine register similar to alter-ego Camille. *If Eye Was The Man In Ur Life* and *A Million Days* have also been plucked from the top drawer of his love-song collection. Two Grammy Awards to add to the trophy cabinet underlined the fact that he'd returned to the frontline of pop.



3121

NPG/UNIVERSAL, 2006

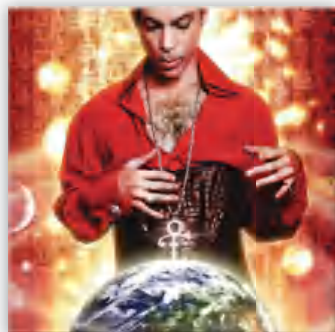
Confident, knowing and occasionally funky ("It's going down y'all / Like the wall of Berlin," smirks the singer on the opening title track), *3121* could compete with contemporary R&B and hip-hop. This was an album that positively reveled in the playboy lifestyle. *Incense And Candles*, *Te Amo Corazón* and *Satisfied* all played up his loverboy image, but it was the nimble funk of *Black Sweat* that stole the show. An album very much within Prince's comfort zone, but none the worse for that.



PLANET EARTH

NPG/COLUMBIA, 2007

This album was one of Prince's most laid-back. This insistent riff of lead-off single *Guitar* seemed to be channelling U2's *The Edge*. The title track was a piano-led ecology ballad, while *Somewhere Here On Earth* boasts Miles Davis-like trumpet. There was a playfulness to the knockabout strumalong *The One U Wanna C*, but the syrupy *Future Baby Mama* and *All The Midnights In The World* should have remained in the vaults. The exuberant disco stomper *Chelsea Rodgers* was much better.



LOTUSFLOW3R

NPG, 2009

If nine albums over the space of as many years in the 00s wasn't enough for you, then how about this to close out the century? *LOTUSFLOW3R* was a sprawling triple-album set containing two Prince records (*Lotusflow3r* and *MPLSound*) and a separate solo effort from his protégé and then-girlfriend Bria Valente (*Elixir*). Recorded over three years, the album shone brightest when Prince flexed his guitar-playing muscles. Some of the solos were astonishing – the best cuts on *MPLSOUND* were those that harked back to his early-80s phase. Meanwhile, the easy-going Valente tunes were attempts at sweet Sade soul, but they rarely hit a home run.



he was operating alone, releasing records as fan club-only affairs or via indie distributors. *The Rainbow Children* was the first album released under his own name since 1993, but the sprawling nature of its lyrics was hard for the masses to grasp. Trademark themes such as the battle between spirituality and sexuality were all in place, but Prince expanded his palette here to include more explicit references to his conversion to the Jehovah's Witness faith.

Brought up as a Seventh-Day Adventist, Prince was converted to the Jehovah's Witness faith by former Sly & The Family Stone bassist Larry Graham. Graham became a father figure and spiritual teacher for the star and the pair remained close friends for the rest of the singer's life. Prince later told *The New Yorker*: "I don't see it really as conversion. More a realisation. It's like Morpheus and Neo in *The Matrix*." The religious conversion coincided with Prince's marriage to his second wife Manuela Testolini.

SOMEWHERE OVER THE RAINBOW

Arion Berger was far from convinced by *The Rainbow Children*. His *Rolling Stone* review in January 2002 said: "Whatever compels Prince to continue expounding on his idea of a spirito-sexual musical revolution remains a mystery all these records away from his greatest, most populist work. He's digging in his high heels harder than ever on the busy, portentous *The Rainbow Children*. It cops jazz forms without swinging, gets James Brownish funky minus the urgency, and offers church interludes that are too mystical to carry earthly convention."

Hardcore fans claimed the album could be seen as a musical and spiritual evolution for the star, and the record was by no means a flop. It eventually went on to sell more than 500,000 copies.

The steady stream of Prince releases – in various forms – continued unabated. May 2002 saw the arrival of *One Nite Alone...*, a stripped-back record featuring Prince mostly on piano. Released online through the NPG Music Club and never commercially available in record stores, it is most notable for a cover of Joni Mitchell's *A Case Of You*, complete with delicate falsetto. In Prince's hands, the song is decidedly more soulful than the stark original.

Welcoming in New Year's Day of 2003 was *Xpectation* – an album of jazz instrumentals featuring classical violinist Vanessa Mae that was available as an mp3 download for NPG Music Club members. Another record that has slipped off the radar for all but the most faithful of fans, it was recently uploaded to Jay Z's Tidal streaming service.

Prince hit his commercial nadir in July 2003 with *N.E.W.S* – another instrumental album, comprising four 14-minute tracks (*North*, *East*, *South* and *West*), which were recorded over the course of a single day. To date, it remains Prince's lowest-selling album, shifting just 30,000 copies. The man himself was hardly shouting from the rooftops, describing it to *Billboard Magazine* as: "one for dinner parties. I'm not trying to shock the world with every record." Despite its weak performance in the charts, it was still nominated for Best Pop Instrumental Performance at that year's Grammy Awards.

RETURN OF THE KING

If there was a landmark moment where Prince transformed from a sidelined former legend to an elder statesman of pop, it could well be his duet



Pretty in pink: live at the *Good Morning America* Summer Concert Series in June 2006, at Bryant Park in New York



In 2007, Prince played 21 nights at London's 20,000-capacity O2 arena

with Beyoncé at the 2004 Grammy Awards. The pair ripped through four songs in a frantic five-minute medley. In what was no doubt a knowing nod to the great George Clinton in his Parliament heyday, Prince descended to the stage through billowing smoke from a spaceship and launched into a stunning version of *Purple Rain* before he was joined by the former Destiny's Child singer.

Beyoncé was still riding high on the success of her debut solo album *Dangerously In Love*, which had been released the previous summer, and this performance could have been seen as a handing over of the torch. But Prince wasn't ready to be consigned to relic status just yet. He couldn't resist the urge to compete as both stars tried to upstage each other. After a quick teased vamp of 1999 the pair tore through *Baby I'm A Star*, *Crazy In Love* – complete with a searing Prince lead-guitar solo – and a final victory lap of *Let's Go Crazy*. It was a sensational reminder of his undimmed star power.

BACK WHERE HE BELONGED

Prince was now back in mainstream consciousness across the globe. It was the perfect platform for him to reassert himself as one of the most audacious live performers of all time and he fully capitalised on that opportunity. In an interview, Prince discussed the time he spent with Beyoncé leading up to the performance.

"I was really curious as to how much she knew musically," he responded. "I was pleased to find out that she knew a lot about scales – Mixolydian scales and Egyptian styles." He added that he showed her some chords on the piano to reinforce the fact that knowing the instrument was a skill that had helped singers such as Aretha Franklin and Ray Charles. Within a month, the comeback had begun in earnest. His 28th studio album, *Musicology*, was released in April 2004 and proved to be his biggest hit in years. Reaching the Top 5 in the UK, United States and Germany, among others, it was his most successful long-player since 1991's *Diamonds And Pearls*.

The record still divides opinion among Prince's more devout followers, who viewed it as a cynical exercise in rewriting his own history rather than pushing things forward. It may be Prince by numbers, but the public finally seemed to be coming around to his way of thinking again.

For once, the album wasn't wholly recorded at his Paisley Park compound. Instead, sessions took place



Prince indulging in a jam session with his musicians following a sold-out concert at the Montreux Jazz Festival, 2007

in Mississauga, Ontario. At its launch, the singer declared that there was a back-to-basics vibe about the record: "I am really an artist and a musician at heart, that's what I do. *Musicology* has no boundaries or formats. It is long overdue to return to the art and craft of music, that's what this album is about. School's in session."

ALL THE CRITICS LOVE U

The album, which was a deft mixture of taut funk and more playful psychedelic pop, found Prince in retrospective mood on the title track. Its video shows a young boy – undoubtedly meant to be Prince – learning to play guitar along to Jimi Hendrix records and there are also nostalgic hat tips to perennial Prince heroes James Brown and Sly Stone.

It garnered decent reviews. Anthony Decurtis from *Rolling Stone* thought it "as appealing, focused and straight-up satisfying an album as Prince has made since who can remember when. It's open, easygoing and inclusive, the sort of album anyone might like. Most notably, *Musicology* restores a refreshing sense of songcraft to Prince's writing. Rather than seeming like mere sketches, as so much of his recent work has, each track on the album is distinct, coherent and rigorously uncluttered."

The *Guardian's* Alexis Petridis gave it a similarly warm welcome, with a few caveats: "Someone, somewhere will always suggest that [Prince's] latest offering is a return to mid-80s form, even if, as in recent years, his latest offering is a jazz concept album about the Jehovah's Witnesses.

"This time, however, even Prince seems convinced he is back in shape. At its best, *Musicology* has music to match his confidence [and] strongly suggests he's finally roused himself from a decade-long self-indulgent torpor."

Barry Nicolson from the *NME* was rather less kind, calling the album a 'flawed redemption': "It's neither inspired enough to be a true classic, nor insipid enough to make it unworthy of your attention. There are moments on here, however fleeting, that prove Prince Rogers Nelson will never lose the ability to surprise and astonish, and there are moments that likewise suggest he'll never lose the ability to frustrate and confound his audience."

Less than a month after *Musicology's* release, Prince made a surprise appearance on the Jimi Hendrix tribute album *Power Of Soul*, contributing a version of the legendary guitarist's old blues workout *Red House*, cheekily retitled *Purple House*. Prince performed a vamped-up version that added synthetic horns to the original arrangement and a stellar guitar solo. The remaining stars on the record included an array of heritage acts including Santana; Eric Clapton; Earth, Wind & Fire; Sting and Lenny Kravitz.

The accompanying *Musicology Tour* – also known by the rather more cumbersome moniker of *Musicology Live 2004ever* – saw Prince reassert his pulling power during an impressive 96-show North American trek. The shows took in more than \$75 million. Gate receipts for the *Musicology Tour* meant that *Rolling Stone* crowned Prince the highest-earning musician for that year, beating the likes of Madonna, Metallica and Elton John. "Prince has returned to centre stage after a decade in the commercial wilderness," the magazine reported.

And the accolades kept on coming for Prince. Influential US magazine *Spin* named him the

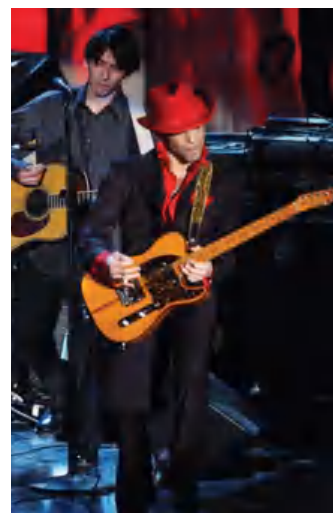
THE ONE U WANNA C

LIVE HIGHLIGHTS 2000-2009

ROCK AND ROLL HALL OF FAME

2004

Sensational and downright hilarious, Prince blew all manner of rock royalty off the stage on a cover of *While My Guitar Gently Weeps* during this tribute to George Harrison at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. The show also included Tom Petty, ELO's Jeff Lynne, Steve Winwood and Harrison's son, Dhani. Prince threw in every trick in the book into his performance, including playing with his teeth and pretending to fall into the crowd before totally upstaging his auspicious company with a shredding solo. Prince ended the set by throwing his guitar into the air. Somewhat mysteriously, it still hasn't come down. It was a little disrespectful in the circumstances perhaps, but at least Dhani looked amused at his antics.



BRIT AWARDS, EARLS COURT, LONDON

2006

Booking His Royal Purpleness for the Brit Awards in 2006 was a major coup for the organisers. Even more newsworthy was the fact that the performance saw Prince reunited with Wendy & Lisa from his former backing band The Revolution, as well as percussionist Sheila E. After a decent rendition of *Fury*, the mini-set really caught fire when they launched into *Purple Rain*. By the time the band started to play *Let's Go Crazy*, Prince was rolling around on a rose petal-strewn stage. A dazzling solo at the end of the song topped off 10 minutes of controlled carnage. Fellow performers at the show – including Kanye West, Paul Weller and Coldplay – could only look on in awe.



COACHELLA

2008

People still talk about Prince's performance at the Californian Coachella festival in hushed tones – his 2008 set has frequently been voted the greatest ever seen at the prestigious event. It was a set packed full of highlights, from the nostalgic thrill of him being reunited with Morris Day, Sheila E and Chaka Khan to his total reinvention of Radiohead's *Creep*. As well as playing his own 80s classics, Prince also threw in covers of The Beatles' *Come Together* and The B-52's *Rock Lobster*. "His Coachella set wasn't exactly a miracle," wrote the *Los Angeles Times*. "But by the time he added apocalyptic party anthem *Let's Go Crazy* as an addendum to a glorious *Purple Rain*, the artist had reached his goal of making the festival 'Prince's house'." The hipsters didn't know what had hit 'em.



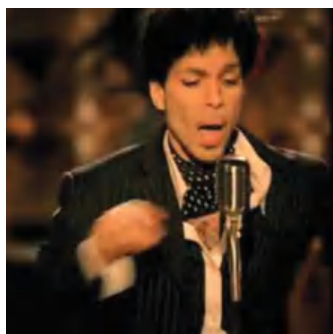
DIGITAL GARDEN

VIDEOS 2000 TO 2009

MUSICOLOGY

2004

Packed with references to the likes of Marvin Gaye; Burt Bacharach; Jimi Hendrix; Sly Stone; Earth, Wind & Fire and James Brown, *Musicology* is a homage to the influences that remained with Prince throughout his working life. Flipping between scenes of a young boy – presumably Prince as a whippersnapper – in his bedroom learning how to play guitar and the main man himself performing a raucous live show that ends in a riot, this showed that a major label still backed Prince enough to spend some serious cash on his videos.



TE AMO CORAZÓN

2005

Directed by Hollywood actress Salma Hayek, no less, and shot in Marrakech, the title of this Latin-tinged ballad roughly translates from Spanish as “I Love You, Sweetheart”. The video’s hugely romantic and just a tad pretentious: Prince dives into his rhiad’s swimming pool fully clothed before acrobats twirl in the rafters overhead for no apparent reason while he plays his guitar. The object of the Purple One’s affections here is actress Mia Maestro, a friend of Hayek.



SO WHAT THE FUSS (WITH STEVIE WONDER)

2005

Okay, so the shadowy guitar player in the video may or may not be Prince, but that’s definitely him on the record. The Purple One provides an understated and funky guitar line that underpins one of Stevie Wonder’s best songs since his 70s pomp. The pair are also joined in this video by the original four members of En Vogue. Wonder’s 2005 album *A Time To Love* may have slipped under your radar, but this video is well worth checking out. Prince and Wonder also reunited in July 2010 for a superb live version of *Superstition* in Paris that you can find on YouTube.



BLACK SWEAT

2006

Prince’s most memorable video of the noughties, this promo for a top-drawer slice of stripped-back funk was suitably minimalist and a rather classy affair. The black-and-white clip features the singer in playful mood as dancer Celestina Aladekoba – previously best known for her appearances on the Jennifer Lopez reality show *DanceLife* – writhes suggestively around him. Sometimes a simple, well-executed idea and a whole heap of star power is all you need to make a great video.



greatest frontman of all time, leaving Mick Jagger, Robert Plant, James Brown and Elvis trailing in his wake. By 2004, the NPG clearing house was still running at full steam.

The Chocolate Invasion and *The Slaughterhouse*, two compilations of various tracks dating back to the start of the decade, were released on the same day in March, to little fanfare. These were explicitly presented as compilations though, not structured albums. Perhaps Prince was now finally resigned to the new breed of music fans brought up on iTunes, who stripped out their favourite tracks from a record and ditched the remainder, riding roughshod over any sense an artist may have had about running orders and narrative themes.

While these new releases kept the hardcore fanbase happy, the public at large viewed it an exercise in treading water. It was time to change things up once more.

THE NUMBERS GAME

Prince’s second major release of the decade was *3121*, a coherent and disciplined affair where he once more played the traditional promotional game. Boasting no less than three singles and distributed by Universal Music, it was a satisfying blend of funk, soul and pop. The opening title track features all the classic Prince tics – slap bass, lurching rhythms, retro keyboards, weird treated vocals and, of course, a healthy dose of double entendres. There’s even a little nod, perhaps, to The Eagles’ *Hotel California* with its refrain, “You can come if you want to, but you can never leave”.

Navigating swiftly past the rather dubious lyrical concerns of *Lolita*, the remainder of the album builds on the promise of the title track with the likes of the pretty Spanish ballad *Te Amo Corazón* and the crackling funk of *Black Sweat*, the latter sporting a remarkable transformation from its roots as an acoustic-blues track.

Typical of the period, the smooth R&B of *Incense And Candles* features vocodered vocals, while *Satisfied* is a return to the old-school 70s soul of Teddy Pendergrass and Al Green. *Te Amo Corazón* had a slinky video directed by Hollywood actress Salma Hayek and shot in Marrakech, Morocco, and the stripped-back black-and-white promo clip for *Black Sweat* was nominated for Best Cinematography at the MTV Video Music Awards.

The campaign for the record went from strength to strength with a successful appearance on *Saturday Night Live*, with performances of *Fury* and *Beautiful, Loved And Blessed*.

Taking a cue from *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory*, another cunning marketing ploy was to place seven winning tickets inside CDs worldwide. The top prize was a star-studded private party and performance at Prince’s own home.

The *Guardian*’s Alexis Petridis, although noting stylistic similarities to earlier classics such as *Let’s Go Crazy* and *Little Red Corvette*, was impressed by the songcraft and Prince’s commitment to the album. “There’s more to *3121* than the prickle of nostalgia,” he wrote. “Amid the title track’s murky, unsettling groove and the grinding techno noise of *Love*, Prince sounds thrillingly alive, a veteran throwing down a cocky, confident challenge to any young pretenders. The polymath genius of legend seems to be reasserting himself in the album’s casual stylistic

shifts from *Lolita's* pure pop to *Te Amo Corazón's* Latin smooch and *Satisfied's* southern soul."

WEB OF INTRIGUE

Prince's love-hate affair with the internet shape-shifted throughout the latter part of his career. He welcomed its ability to cut out record company bureaucracy and get his music directly to his fans, but was a constant critic of file-sharing and free content.

In June 2006, he received a Webby Lifetime Achievement Award in recognition of his 'visionary' use of the internet. After all, he was the first major artist to release an entire album (1997's *Crystal Ball*) exclusively online.

Prince's reaction to winning the award was typically perverse. Within weeks he had shut down his NPG Music Club website after more than five years and declared all life memberships null and void. "The future holds nothing but endless opportunity and we plan on seizing it wholeheartedly. Don't u want 2 come?" said the closing email sent to members.

BOWLING THEM OVER

After the success of *Musicology* and *3121*, Prince's status as the elder statesman of US pop was cemented at one of the country's most iconic events – the half-time show during 2007's Super Bowl between the Indianapolis Colts and the Chicago Bears at Dolphin Stadium in Florida. It had never rained in the 40 years of the Super Bowl's history, but the elements opened on Prince on an almost biblical scale.

Bruce Rodgers was production designer for the half-time show. He explained: "On the morning of the game I opened the curtains of my hotel room and it was like a scene from *Moby Dick*. The winds were blowing the palm trees and it was one of those Miami rainstorms that just would not relent. When we spoke to Prince on the phone beforehand, he said 'Can you make it rain harder?'. I thought, 'right on!'"

Half-time show producer Don Mischer added: "Prince's set wasn't about promoting a new project or a new single. He wanted it to be something a gigantic audience would love. He covered the Foo Fighters, John Fogerty, Bob Dylan. He was selfless in that sense. He just wanted to make it a great show.

"We were so worried about the rain, because the stage was designed in the shape of his symbol, and it had a very slippery floor on top; when it got wet, it was almost treacherous. His two dancers, The



Prince's stunning 2008 Coachella set became the stuff of festival legend

Giving a colourful performance on *The Tonight Show With Jay Leno* in 2009

Twinz, were wearing eight-and-a-half-inch heels. We were terrified of the rain and [hoped they] would all be able to stay on their feet."

Prince's astonishing medley included *Let's Go Crazy*, *Baby I'm A Star* and *Purple Rain*, but also went against tradition by throwing in a clutch of covers including Queen's *We Will Rock You*, Dylan's *All Along The Watchtower* (in the electrified Hendrix style), the Foo Fighters' *Best Of You* and Creedence Clearwater Revival's *Proud Mary*.

Jon Pareles, senior music critic on *The New York Times*, explained "Prince's set was just so wild. He did other people's songs. He wasn't promoting himself. He was just making music. It was profound, loud and funky. Just one performer shaking the entire world."

Last year, *Billboard.com* rated it the greatest Super Bowl performance ever. And quite rightly so.

LONDON CALLING

With his profile at its highest for more than two decades, Prince effortlessly managed to sell out 21 nights at London's 20,000-capacity O2 arena in August and September 2007. In keeping with his album's title, ticket prices were capped at £31.21. The three-hour shows were an absolute triumph and often directly followed by further secret gigs at tiny clubs across the capital that went on well into the small hours. Neil McCormick of the *Telegraph* reviewed the first O2 show and was overflowing with praise: "One of the greatest performers of the modern age, Prince has an arsenal of musical weaponry at his disposal and he's not afraid to use it all. His guitar playing – whether rhythmic, soulful funk chords or flaring heavy rock leads – is some of the best you'll hear anywhere. His singing switches between seductive whisper, raw-throated scream and impossibly sweet falsettos. And when he is neither singing nor playing, he is executing nimble dance moves... He genuinely seems to be having fun with both audience and band."

WITH HIS PROFILE AT ITS HIGHEST FOR OVER TWO DECADES, PRINCE SOLD OUT 21 NIGHTS AT LONDON'S O2 ARENA

With Prince headlines in the UK not seen since his mid-80s pomp, the *Mail On Sunday* announced that it would be releasing Prince's latest album, *Planet Earth*, free with a copy of the newspaper in July 2007. The move sent shockwaves through the music business, with the UK arm of his distributors, Sony BMG, even threatening to withdraw stocks in stores nationwide once it became available. The album itself was a steady mix of rock, disco, R&B and pop, and was most notable for its appearances by percussionist Sheila E and Wendy & Lisa.

Despite the heavy workload of the live shows, Prince showed no signs of taking his eye off the ball when it came to his constant bugbear of internet piracy. In September 2007, he hired the British-based company Web Sheriff to track down illegal uploads of his music that had been placed online. He had a

variety of internet companies in his sights, including the BitTorrent tracking site The Pirate Bay, eBay and YouTube.

At the time, Web Sheriff's president John Giacobbi

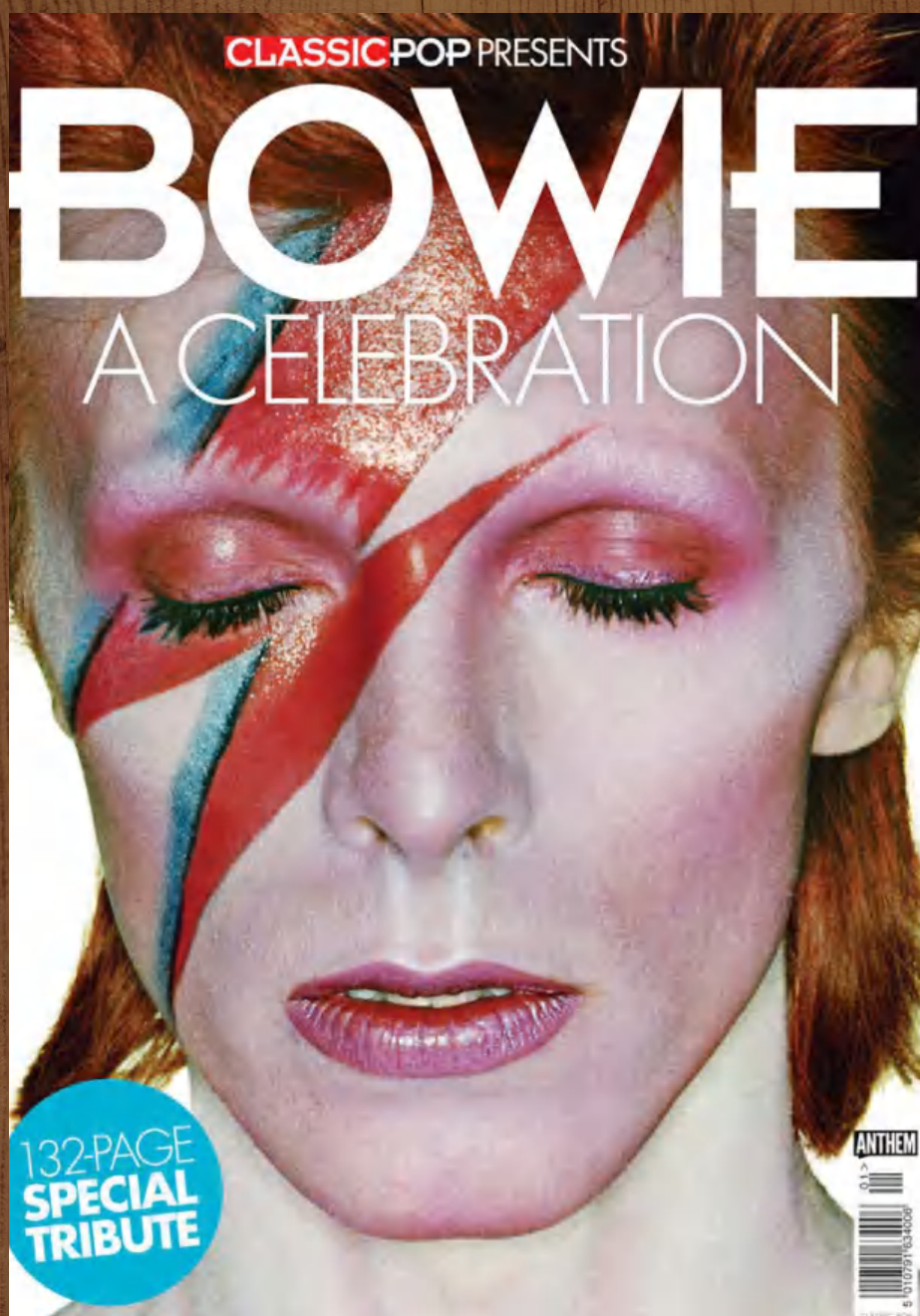
explained that the star had already had 2,000 of his clips removed from YouTube only to find several hundred uploads taking their place within a handful of days. "Very few artists have ever taken this kind of action over their rights," said a spokesman for Prince. "But he has shown time and time again that he is ready to challenge the system in new ways to put artists and music first."

If his 21-date residency at the O2 had left UK audiences in thrall to his live act, fans in Ireland were left in the lurch when Prince cancelled a date at Croke Park in Dublin on 16 June 2008 with just 10 days' notice. The case was eventually settled out of court with Prince being forced to pay almost \$3 million. But the fact this 55,000 capacity stadium had sold out – even if the show didn't actually materialise – had shown just how far the artist had come since the time when it seemed the world had stopped listening. ■

POP UP Prince's dislike of YouTube extended to covers he performed. He issued takedown notices for videos of his live cover of Radiohead's *Creep*. Thom Yorke was dumbfounded: "He's blocked it? Tell him to unblock it. It's our... song."



BUY ONLINE!



anthem.subscribeonline.co.uk/specials



Search **Classic Pop**
magazine



@classicpopmag

POP ART

THE WORD PROLIFIC DOESN'T DO JUSTICE TO PRINCE'S MUSICAL OUTPUT. HERE, WE LOOK AT SLEEVE DESIGN HIGHLIGHTS, LARGELY FROM THE EARLIER PART OF A CAREER THAT SPANNED CLOSE TO 40 YEARS. FROM FAMILIAR COMMERCIAL RELEASES TO COLLECTIBLE AND OBSCURE RARITIES, THE DESIGN STYLES WERE AS DIVERSE AS THE MUSIC THEY PACKAGED

ANDREW DINELEY



In 1978, just as punk was very publicly running out of steam in the UK, Prince's first album was released. It arrived to very little fanfare; at this time, the music scene mainly comprised a confusing muddle of angry revolutionaries, refugees from the disco era and a few pioneering 'new wave' artists, all ready to be the next big thing. Prince, it turned out, would possess a little of each of these, along with many more compelling musical attributes.

The cover design of the first album, *For You*, ¹ was deliberately enigmatic and understated. It depicted simply the artist in a motion-blurred, oversaturated headshot taken by Joe Giannetti.

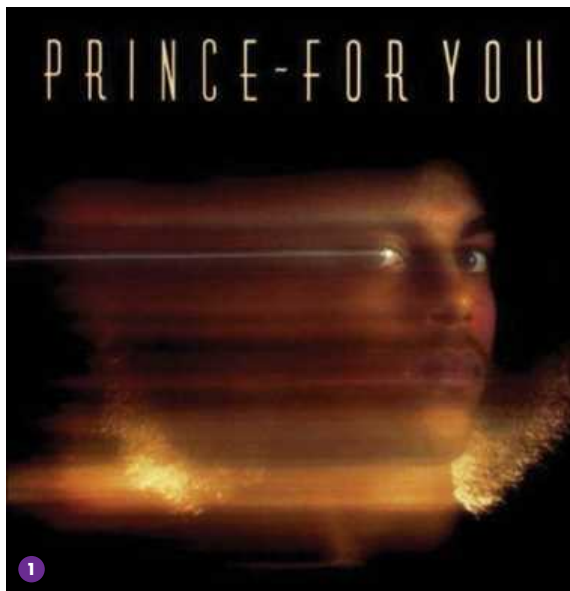
In an interview with Liz Raiss for *Fader* magazine, Giannetti offered some insight into the development of this first cover design. "He was just beginning when I was hired to shoot the *For You* album cover. At the time, there weren't a lot of makeup artists who understood how to do makeup for [black] people. But he had found someone who knew," he said.

"[Prince] had a giant afro and made it clear he wasn't going to cut it, so the hair kind of dictated

[the cover]. He came in with two of his friends. All three of them were very at ease with doing this, which was a great relief because a lot of the other people who were there were kind of uptight."

During this formative period, Prince's record label would purposefully promote him as the new Stevie Wonder – a credible newcomer who produced, arranged, composed and played all the musical instruments and sang his own material. The 'dust cover' was even credited as being designed by Prince, one of few creative areas that he would relinquish and delegate to other people during his career.

Within a couple of years, Prince had gained enough confidence for a brave restyle, daring to be so different that his image alone demanded that you take notice or else risk missing out. In 1980, he released the album *Dirty Mind*. ² Its title inevitably dictated a considerably more risqué package than *For You* and spawned a challenging stage costume for live performances in that period. The black and white cover photograph, taken by Allen Beaulieu, immediately did its job as intended.





I just can't believe all the things people say. Controversy. Am I black or white? Am I straight or gay?

LYRICS FROM *CONTROVERSY*

With underground fame and notoriety now secured, Prince was becoming established as a maverick, if not a hit maker in every territory – yet.

The cover showed him striking a defiantly sexual pose, the first of many that would challenge ingrained perceptions of gender, masculinity and femininity. Wearing little but black panties and a raincoat, reminiscent of a 'flasher mac', he's seen posing in front of a background of bedsprings. Is he pimp, prostitute, neither or both?

This iconic image remains arresting to this day. Also of note is the inner-sleeve group shot ³ that shows possibly the strangest street gang in record-cover history. The band members are lined up behind their leader, Prince, each confidently working a variety of fiercely divergent looks; from masked surgeon to 2 Tone rude boy, businessman to hustler. These grainy images, combined with handwriting and spray-painted text, set a new tone for the music

and signalled a further shift in direction. As if the imagery alone wasn't enough, some territories felt it necessary to add a warning sticker about the album's lyrical content, urging "Programmers, please audition prior to airing". Similar warning stickers often also appeared on Prince's singles, including the sleeve of *Gotta Stop (Messin' About)*. ⁴

While on tour in Europe, Prince attended a party at The Embassy Club in London. It was hosted by Steve Strange, who went on to front the band Visage and spearhead a whole new romantic movement of 'gender benders' and peacock pop players. Prince was said to have been fascinated by the experience and would go on to further appropriate the more flamboyant elements of what he'd seen into a look that would eventually be seen during his *Purple Rain* period.

Controversy ⁵ couldn't have been a more apt title for the next album in 1981. At first glance, the cover appeared



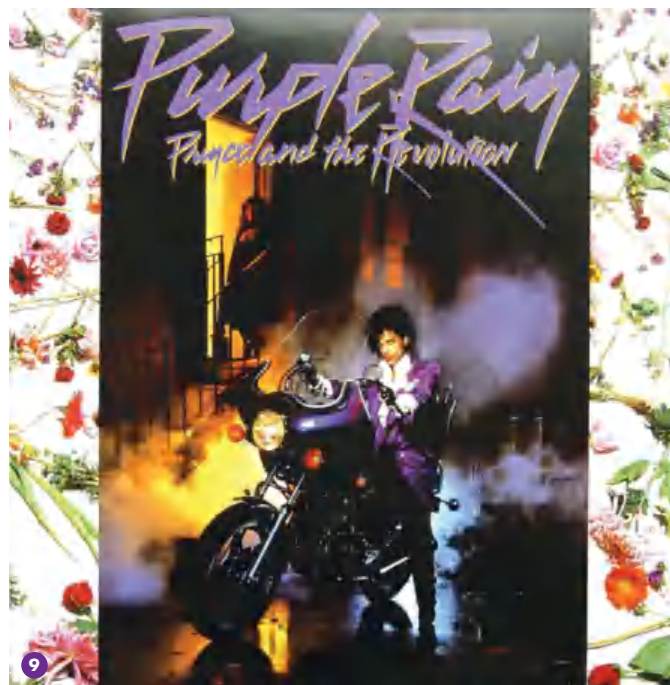
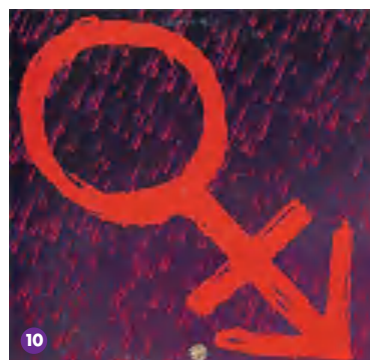


considerably more restrained; the same raincoat appeared, with Prince fully clothed, standing in front of controversial newspaper headlines. Any fears that our purple-clad hero may have gone mainstream, however, were immediately allayed upon seeing the free, large-format poster that came with the album. It showed a pouting Prince showering, posed next to a strategically placed crucifix 6. A promotional poster



for the album was also designed for use in the music press 7. This, too, lived up to the album title, showing a schoolgirl nervously clutching a copy of the album surrounded by three of the sacred icons of American culture: the flag, the holy cross and a biblical passage, written large on a classroom chalk board. Controversy indeed.

In 1982, Prince released 1999 8, the album that finally launched him into the global mainstream. It became one of the year's bestselling albums in the USA, and spawned worldwide charting singles 1999 and Little Red Corvette. Finally, he was a household name. Interestingly, 1999 was the first of Prince's albums not to include a prominent photograph of him on the cover. Its bold design instead featured a naïve rendering of his name and the album title. It was also the first sleeve to reference his backing band, The Revolution, albeit obliquely, handwritten backwards on the cover only (with no mention on the labels or album spine). Keen-eyed observers may have



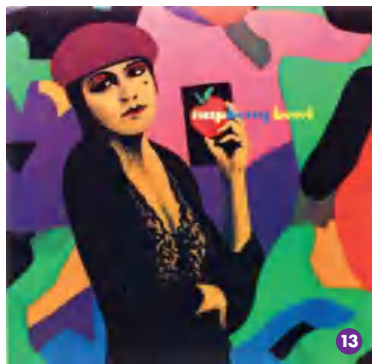
noticed that photographic elements from the previous album cover – his eyes, Rude Boy badge and gold coat studs all featured within the design as cut-up and collaged elements.

1984 saw the release of Purple Rain 9 – the album and the single. Prince was also transcending the music genre by embracing Hollywood with a movie of the same name. With a credit now also rightfully in place for The Revolution on the album sleeve, Prince 'the brand' was firmly established. It was during this period that many of the iconic elements we now associate with his oeuvre were consolidated. Use of the colour purple was established and symbolic icons would appear for the first time as subtle details on the motorbike he sat astride in the cover photograph, taken by Ed Thrasher.

It was a variant of the male/female symbol that would eventually become a replacement for his name, but during this period it was given considerable prominence on the sleeve of a Japanese double album entitled *Strange Tales From The Rain*.

10 This rare set was issued to radio stations in advance of the movie's release and contained the entire movie soundtrack with contributions from Apollonia 6, The Time and others – not just the Prince tracks that were on the commercially released soundtrack.

With the next album, *Around The World In A Day* 11, Prince and The Revolution embraced psychedelia and headed off in an



unexpected direction musically and visually, leading to some of the best record sleeves of his career. With its gatefold sleeve and wraparound tracklisting detail, the *Around The World In A Day* cover was a lavish affair.

At the time, Prince said: "The cover art came about because I thought people were tired of looking at me. Who wants another picture of him? I would only want so many pictures of my woman, then I would want the real thing. What would be a little more happening would be if there was some way I could materialise in people's cribs when they play the record. I don't mind [the album being called psychedelic], because that was the only period in recent history that delivered songs and colours."



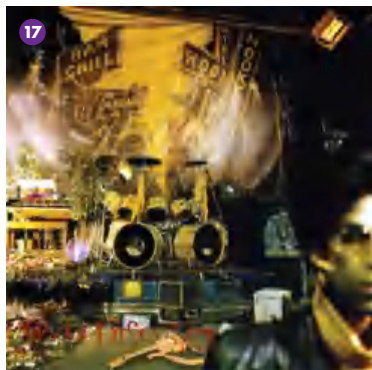
Doug Henders' lush cover painting encapsulated the experimental mood of the album perfectly. It featured an array of characters – some laughing, some crying, all of them utterly intriguing – positioned around a pool with a ladder stretching from its depths up to heaven above.

The psychedelic mountain range in the background is actually the silhouette of a naked woman. Look more closely and it becomes apparent that one of the summits is actually a nipple. There's so much symbolism in this cover design that it really warrants a feature all of its own.

Several of the characters gained lives of their own on the sleeves of the singles that came from this seminal release. The white-haired weeping woman, ▶

"Most of the figures are characters in the songs, but I think some of the people Prince wanted are parts of himself, so they're somewhat autobiographical. The little puppy was added because Prince got himself a dog while on the road." **DOUG HENDERS ON THE AROUND THE WORLD IN A DAY COVER**

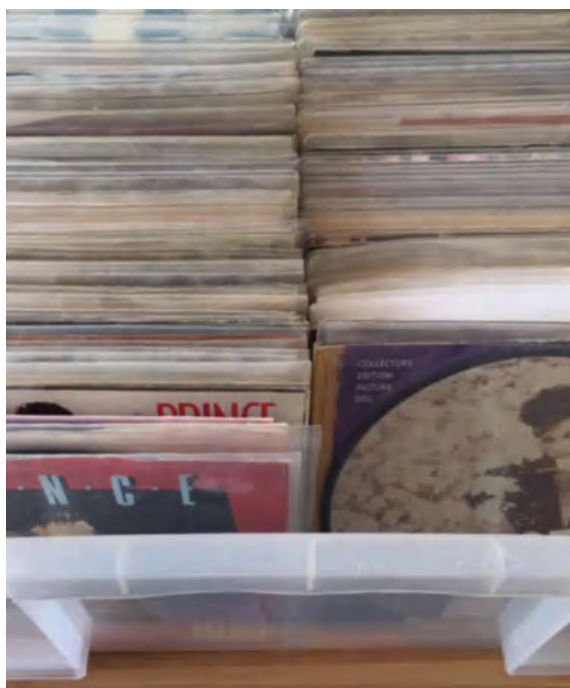




16 PRINCE AND THE REVOLUTION / PARADE



PRINCE AND THE REVOLUTION / PARADE



"The cover art came about because I thought people were tired of looking at me. Who wants another picture of him? I would only want so many pictures of my woman, then I would want the real thing."

PRINCE ON HIS ALBUM ART

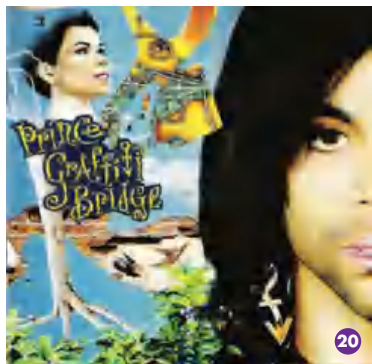
the woman wearing the beret and the flag-waving baby featured on *Pop Life* ¹², *Raspberry Beret* ¹³ and *America* ¹⁴, respectively. The *Paisley Park* single was released in limited quantities as a shaped picture disc ¹⁵. The paisley-patterned version, used on standard formats, went on to be used as the logo for Prince's *Paisley Park* label, a subsidiary of WEA Records.

In 1986, Prince completed yet another stylistic *volte face*. *Parade* ¹⁶, a soundtrack released three months before its film *Under The Cherry Moon*, couldn't have been more different from what had been released just one year earlier. Illustrations, colour and whimsy were summarily replaced with clean typography and monochrome portrait photography by Jeff Katz, who would go on to become a regular collaborator and was also responsible for the amber-hued scene on the cover of

1987's *Sign O' The Times* ¹⁷.

The image depicts career remnants strewn across the stage set of the concert film of the same name. This would be all many fans would see of this period in a live setting, because many dates, for which fans were encouraged to "wear peach and black", were cancelled.

The hard-not-to-notice album cover for *Lovesexy* ¹⁸ grabbed Prince headlines across the world before people had even heard the songs. Many familiar motifs – florals, nudity and the colour purple – were re-introduced by fêted video director and photographer, Jean-Baptiste Mondino. He was commissioned to photograph Prince for what would become the artist's most infamous album cover. The image is said to reference Botticelli's *The Birth Of Venus*, but it was the tumescent flower stamen that grabbed most people's attention. The combination of these elements



was too much for some retailers, who ended up selling the album from under the counter or in a plain black cover sleeve. This was particularly ironic considering that *Lovesexy* was the first album to be released after his aborted *Black Album*, which would have been released in a plain black cover.

At this point in Prince's career, his conflict with his record company had reached a critical point, and this coincided with an apparent lack of interest in his cover art, too. Perhaps it all got too big to manage, with different territories requiring different treatments. Perhaps it was less of a priority, with the music having to come first as he struggled with his well-documented legal and contractual complexities. While there are still some visual gems among his album covers from this point on, they do become fewer and further between.

Some highlights from the later part of Prince's recording career include 1992's *Love Symbol* ¹⁹ album. For this release, his name was boldly replaced by a futuristic hieroglyphic, based on the hybrid male/female symbol that first appeared on the sleeves of *Purple Rain* and 1990's *Graffiti Bridge* ²⁰, the soundtrack to his final feature film.

The *Rainbow Children* album cover ²¹ from 2001 prominently featured a beautiful painting by Cbabi Bayoc, an acronym for Creative Black Artist Battling Ignorance and Blessed African Youth Of Creativity. At first glance, Prince seems absent, but closer inspection reveals a photograph of him standing in front of the repeated image. He can also be seen at the edge of the cover, effectively hidden in the spine of the format. This painting was created specifically for the album cover, but was based on one of the artist's existing pieces.

In 2009, Prince released two albums at the same time –



Lotusflow3r ²² and *MPLSound*. ²³ These were available on CD exclusively from Target stores in the USA, but fans across the world were able to get hold of the tracks online as Prince continued to adapt to digital revolution, independently of the big players such as iTunes, Amazon and Spotify. The website dedicated to these releases offered exclusive content including merchandise and tickets to live shows, along with several online-only exclusives.

The uncredited designs of these albums are an homage to record releases from the 1970s by artists who would have been an influence on the young Prince, probably a deliberate visual indication of the funk-rock direction that he would continue to explore until his untimely death in 2016. ■



Special thanks to Stephen Shipperlee for allowing access to his exhaustive Prince collection and helping unearth plenty of diamonds and pearls.



TIME EVENTMENT

2010s

EVERYBODY LOVES ME

NOW INSTALLED AS AN ELDER STATESMAN OF POP,
PRINCE TAKES A STAND AGAINST THE 'WILD WEST'
OF THE INTERNET AND IS GIVEN AN ARTISTIC SHOT
IN THE ARM BY A DYNAMIC ALL-GIRL TRIO...

STEVE HARNELL

Prince performs at
Denmark's Roskilde
Festival, 4 July, 2010



THE

success of Prince as a touring artist was both a blessing and a curse for his studio work. Although his live shows were often sprinkled liberally with new songs, it was his run of classics from the 80s and

early 90s that was the main attraction. By now, his Paisley Park production line had settled into a groove, arguably happy to coast on former glories. For a man with talent to burn, it seemed frustrating to many that he wasn't pushing himself more.

He still had the ability to make a splash, though. Amid much fanfare, his first album of the new decade, *20Ten*, was to be given away for free with copies of the *Daily Mirror* newspaper. More than 2.5 million copies were pressed and an exclusive interview with the tabloid – his first with a British newspaper for over a

decade – promised an exclusive insight into the enigmatic star's life.

The feature, by Peter Willis, was an interesting blend of typical tabloid sensationalism and broad-stroke description, alongside Prince's clear intention to highlight his religious views. Willis begins with a vignette about Prince spreading his Jehovah's Witness faith by knocking on doors in his neighbourhood. "One of the world's raunchiest rock stars, Prince is in his stacked heels and flamboyant suit, strutting from house to house around an ordinary suburban estate. Flanked by minders, he goes up a garden path, knocks on a door and politely asks the householder: 'Would you like to talk about God?' It's an extraordinary image. You can only imagine the shock of a homeowner finding the superstar on their doorstep clutching a Bible and delivering a message about the divine."

"Much of what he says, as well as his songwriting, revolves around his beliefs these days. Even the mysterious numbers he slots into his material are thought to be coded biblical references."

It was clear that Prince's religious beliefs were now as fundamental to his very existence as his commitment to music. Willis contended that whereas the studio at Paisley Park used to be its most important feature, it was now the first-floor sanctuary at the complex called The Knowledge Room where Prince spent up to six hours a day studying the Bible.

For years, the battle between the physical and the divine had raged within Prince. Now his spiritual side was in the ascendancy. He began dropping the more sexual songs in his back catalogue as they seemed at odds with his faith. As if to underline this overarching 'purity', visitors were fined \$20 every time they swore in his presence.

20Ten found him multitasking once again.

It was pretty much a one-man concern, with Prince composing, producing and arranging all the tracks himself. He also played nearly all the instruments, save for three backing vocalists and a horn section trio that included the legendary Maceo

BY THIS TIME, PRINCE'S RELIGIOUS BELIEFS WERE AS FUNDAMENTAL TO HIS VERY EXISTENCE AS HIS COMMITMENT TO MUSIC

Parker, former sideman of James Brown.

If fans thought that a record titled *20Ten* would be bang up to date, they would be very much mistaken. Opening track *Compassion* and *Lavaux* made no concessions to contemporary sounds. Its retro keyboards, hand claps and drum machine could have come directly from a mid-80s Pointer Sisters single. Despite the *au courant* vocoder vocals on *Future Soul Song*, the easy-going ballad is something akin to Luther Vandross. The slow-burning *Walk In Sand* was also the sound of a man content to stay within his comfort zone. There were signs of life elsewhere, though. There's more edginess to the biting keyboard washes and martial drum breaks of *Beginning Endlessly*, while the funky pop of *Sticky Like Glue* and *Act Of God* also stand out, despite trading on former glories.

The critics – with the exception of the *Daily Mirror*, of course, which called it his best album since *Sign* —

POP UP *20Ten* has a moment which at least partially dispels Prince's reputation about being touchy about his diminutive stature – hidden track *Laydown* casts him as "the purple Yoda".





Prince performs with Misty Copeland during the Welcome 2 America Tour at New York City's Madison Square Garden on December 29, 2010

Prince performs during his *Welcome 2 Europe Tour* at Ahoy on 8 July, 2011 in Rotterdam, Netherlands



O' The Times – were lining up to take pot shots. Jason Draper from the *NME* was scathing: "We don't expect – or even want – another *Housequake*, but the least his majesty could do is more than phone in snooze-funk for a presumably hefty advance from a newspaper."

Prince supported the album with a sprint around Europe over two legs, ending with a final show following the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix. Much more was to come, though. The 80-date *Welcome 2* tour was to be a huge victory lap across North America with the New Power Generation.

With the promise that no two shows would be the same, the tour was played in the round, with Prince and band performing on a stage shaped like his iconic love symbol. As usual, Prince was a huge draw for a wide variety of celebrities and the great and the good from the worlds of movies, music and fashion lined up to join him on stage. Jamie Foxx, Alicia Keys, Whoopi Goldberg and Naomi Campbell were just a handful of the stars who took up his invitation.

The tour was another huge success, but eventually sounded the death knell for the New Power Generation – at least for the time being. The band was always a rather fluid affair, rebuilt and reconstituted at Prince's whim depending on the project he was tackling. By 2010, three trusted members of the band – drummer Michael Bland, keyboard player Tommy Barbarella and bassist Sonny T, had already abandoned the mothership for the rather less rarefied surroundings of a side project for Nick Jonas of the Jonas Brothers.

THE INTERNET'S COMPLETELY OVER

If Prince thought he'd won his hard-fought battle with traditional record companies, then by 2010, a new enemy had lurched into view – online streaming services. His perennial concern that musicians were failing to get their just deserts had now come to fruition, with many artists having their complete back catalogue now available on online sites such as Spotify and receiving shockingly low royalty rates. The sheer wealth of his material that had been uploaded to YouTube was also distressing for the singer. It would be a battle he'd continue for the rest of his life. He also relentlessly pursued people who illegally uploaded his material to sites such as SoundCloud and Dailymotion. "I have a team of female black lawyers who keep an eye on such transgressions," he told *Billboard* magazine. "And you know they're sharp." Many established artists had given up fighting the 'Wild West' of the internet and



Prince and 3rdeyegirl perform at Vogue Theatre on 15 April, 2013 in Vancouver

At Stade de France on 30 June 30, 2011: Welcome 2... was Prince's 21st tour and spanned more than 80 dates around the world



were happy purely making money from live shows. The old days of living off your records sales were dead, they'd say.

As one of the biggest live draws in the world, it would be easy for Prince to have adopted a similar attitude, but he remained resolute: if you provide a service as a musician, whether it be from the studio or as a live act, the bottom line is that you deserve to be paid for it. "The internet's completely over," he told *The Mirror* in 2010. "I don't see why I should give my new music to iTunes or anyone else. They won't pay me an advance for it and then they get angry when they can't get it."

THREE IS THE MAGIC NUMBER

After almost a quarter of a century as Prince's backing band, the New Power Generation

retreated to the background in 2013, as he sought out an alternative way to present his music. And what was the NPG's replacement? An

all-girl power trio with impeccable musical credentials.

Kentucky-born drummer Hannah Welton was previously behind the kit for fusion band Pandorum and rock act Bellevue Suite. Guitarist Donna Grantis came armed with an impressive CV, too. A prodigious talent, at her first public performance, aged 16, she made the semi-finals in the North American Jimi Hendrix Electric Guitar Competition, and played *Red House* in front of Jimi's dad, Al. The Canadian then won a scholarship to study for a jazz performance degree at McGill University in Montreal.

A career as a much-in-demand session player soon beckoned, but after Prince delegated recruiting the members of 3rdeyegirl to Welton and her husband Joshua, the new band began to take shape. Completing the line-up was Danish bassist Ida Kristine Nielsen, also known under her sassier stage names as Bassida and Ida Funkhouser. A graduate from the

Royal Danish Academy Of Music, she already had a solo album under her belt with 2007's *Marmelade*.

The news of Prince's new power-trio backing band was hugely exciting for his fans. The new three piece's biggest splash came with the release of *Screwdriver*, a raunchy tune boasting the refrain: "I'm your driver, you're my screw". The unadulterated rocker was the most vital thing he'd released for years. As a one-off statement of intent, it was hugely impressive.

The project was beginning to take shape, but it would still be another year until 3rdeyegirl would release their debut studio album. In the meantime, Prince revealed that his upcoming Live Out Loud

Tour would feature the trio as his backing band – the only twist being that former Revolution drummer Bobby Z would step in for the final two hometown dates

of the first leg in Minneapolis. The NPG would also be taken out of mothballs for a handful of shows.

It was a fresh start for Prince in many ways. The greatest

hits sets were ditched in favour of mostly new material. Venue sizes were also scaled down and the singer regularly performed two sets a day. *Screwdriver*, *FixUrLifeUp* and *Plectrumelectrum* became staples of the set, but fan and media pressure soon saw the likes of *Sign O' The Times*, *U Got The Look*, *When Doves Cry* and, of course, *Purple Rain* gradually reintroduced into the running order. It was a defeat of sorts for Prince, but it was consistent with his crowd-pleasing nature that he was happy to throw his fans a few bones even while stretching out on a new adventure.

In smaller venues, he could see the whites of the audience's eyes, but that, too, came with its own problems. More accurately, Prince became aware of just how much usage fans were making of their mobile phones to film shows. In January 2014, he began legal action against 22 online fans for bootlegging gigs, citing copyright infringement and unauthorised

IN 2014, PRINCE BEGAN LEGAL ACTION AGAINST ONLINE FANS FOR BOOTLEGGING GIGS, CITING COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT

POP UP In 2015, Prince told reporters: "What I meant was that the internet was over for anyone who wants to get paid, and I was right about that... Tell me a musician who's got rich off digital sales. Apple's doing pretty good though, right?"



MILLION \$ SHOW

LIVE HIGHLIGHTS 2010 TO 2016

HOP FARM MUSIC FESTIVAL

2011

We'll certainly miss the perennial rumour that resurfaced year after year saying Prince would headline Glastonbury. The only time he trod the boards on the main stage of a UK festival was here in Kent in July 2011. Cannily sticking pretty much to a straight-up Greatest Hits set, the show also featured cracking covers of two Sly And The Family Stone songs with original member Larry Graham. The bassist, a long-time friend and collaborator with Prince, played *I Want to Take You Higher* and *Everyday People*.



HIT AND RUN TOUR

LONDON, 2014

Unorthodox in every sense, this was audacious even by Prince's standards. The Hit And Run Tour was almost 'guerilla gigging' and reconnected the singer with the streets. Venues, start times, ticket prices – everything was up for grabs on a tour that ripped up the rulebook and injected a huge amount of excitement into the capital's gig-going scene. Tales of the amazing commitment of fans soon became legend, with some said to have travelled direct from his 14 February show at King's Place to queue up for a further 36 hours to catch his next gig at Koko.



FOX THEATRE

ATLANTA, APRIL 2016

The final show. Part of his ambitious stripped-back Piano & A Microphone Tour, Prince's last ever concert in Georgia was just a week before his death. If he was renowned for his stellar guitar work, this tour was designed to show off his songwriting chops at their most stark. Liberally sprinkled with some of his finest ballads including *The Most Beautiful Girl In The World*, *Nothing Compares 2 U* and *Diamonds And Pearls*, his playful spirit was there until the end – he even covered *Linus And Lucy*, better known as the *Charlie Brown* theme tune.



uploading. He began by suing each of them for \$1 million. Amid a media frenzy which saw him accused of turning against his own supporters, he eventually withdrew the legal action.

RIPPING UP THE RULEBOOK

If the love affair between Prince and the British public – Londoners especially – needed any more consummation, the riveting reconnection with the streets on his Hit And Run Tour in 2014 sealed the deal.

It was a strategy like no other, deftly designed to inject urgency and excitement into a live music environment that was often bloated by over-inflated ticket prices and barn-sized venues with no connection between the artist and crowd. This would be very different. Prince would only be playing intimate venues with next-to-no warning. Fans would have to scour social media for announcements, then race to the venue and queue in the hope they could get their hands on the hottest ticket in town.

The tour was unveiled in the most unlikely of surroundings – a mini-press conference in the flat of singer-songwriter Lianne La Havas in Leyton, east London. The 'event' was attended by BBC 6 Music's Matt Everitt and just two other journalists. Twitter did the rest. Later that night, Prince performed a secret gig billed as an "open press soundcheck" at Camden's Electric Ballroom.

The news was seized upon by fans and the open-ended nature of the band's trip to the UK was a mouthwatering prospect, with Prince adding: "We're going to be here until people don't want to hear us anymore." Wholly unpredictable, the dates, venues and ticket prices for the tour were all up in the air. Fans had no idea whether they'd be asked to pay £70 or £10 for a ticket. There were even rumours that some gigs would be free.

Rekindling memories of his early days in the sweaty bars of Minneapolis, the setlists were a satisfying blend of old and new as 3rdeyegirl material merged seamlessly with the classics. A run of 10 London shows, including two on the same day at the legendary Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club, was followed by dates in Manchester, Birmingham, Glasgow and Leeds.

As the old cliché goes, perhaps the only thing predictable about Prince by now was his unpredictability. After almost a decade of rancour in the 1990s with his record company Warner Bros, in an astonishing about-face he announced in April 2014 that he had re-signed with his former label after an 18-year split.

The first major fruits of the deal were two new studio albums, released on 30 September 2014 – *Plectrumelectrum* and *Art Official Age*. The former's title track is a blast of Zeppesque riff rock written by guitarist Donna Grantis and *PretzelBodyLogic* also benefits from the tight musicianship of his backing trio. There's also a playfulness to the poppy R&B of *BoyTrouble* featuring Lizzo and Sophia Eris.

For the first time in years, Prince seemed much more tuned into contemporary sounds and fashion. On *Art Official Age*'s striking opening track *Art Official Cage*, he managed to channel the funkiness of Nile Rodgers via Daft Punk's *Get Lucky* and the avant-garde adventurous of Kanye West. Lianne La Havas repays the favour of having Prince play in her front room by duetting with him on *Clouds* – a summery pop gem with a spoken-word mid-section where La Havas tells him he's been placed in suspended animation

Prince performs with
Janelle Monáe at
Mohegan Sun Arena on
29 December, 2013 in
Uncasville, Connecticut





Prince looking
psychedelic in promo
shots for *HITnRUN*,
his 2015 release

for the past 45 years. Clearly, Prince was having fun again. It's a mood that's continued through the raucous party anthem *FUNKNROLL* and lithe soulfulness of *The Gold Standard*. *The Telegraph* was suitably impressed, labelling both albums "genuinely thrilling".

The paper's Neil McCormick added in his review: "*Art Official Age* is a slick, seductive electro funk sci-fi concept album with a synthetic ambience evoking classic 80s Prince pop, while *Plectrumelectrum* sees the Minneapolis wonder strap on an electric guitar to dive headlong into the heavy-rock territory he has flirted with since *Purple Rain*."

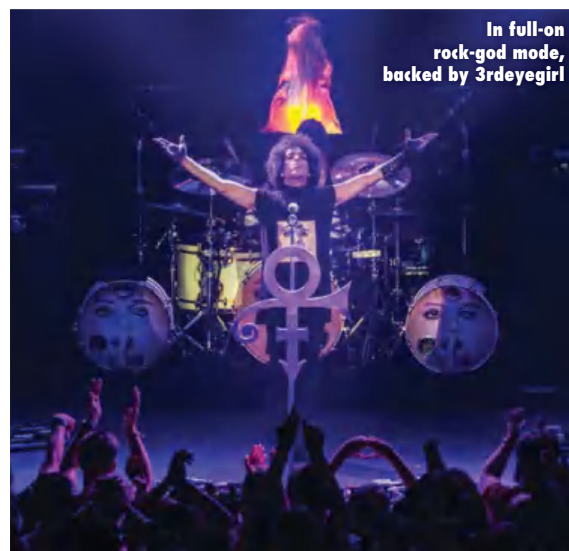
Prince's final two releases, *HITnRUN Phase One* and *HITnRUN Phase Two* were released four months apart on September 2015 and January 2016.

Standouts on *HITnRUN Phase One* were the funky R&B and pop mash-up of *Million \$ Show* featuring Judith Hill, the electro banger *Shut This Down* and the quite superb *Ain't About 2 Stop* with Rita Ora. The album was co-written and co-produced in its entirety with Joshua Welton, husband of 3rdeyegirl's drummer Hannah Welton. The collaboration on *...Phase One* was a watershed moment for Prince and the first time he'd not produced his own studio album.

Joshua Welton spoke to the BBC about his role as co-producer in the studio: "When you've got an iconic person like Prince standing over your shoulder, you've got to produce at a top level all the time. As a friend, you don't want to bring anything that is less than what he's looking for. Why would you give your son or daughter a stone if he's asking for bread?"

"But when you're working with a friend, that's different than trying to make sure your boss is happy. When you've had times [like we've had] where you've been on the floor laughing, you're red in the face and there are tears rolling down your cheeks, you've got inside jokes – that, to me, made the working experience a breeze."

Prince's final album is diverse yet still disciplined. Whereas *...Phase One* attempted to keep up with new kids on the R&B block, its follow-up is a retro throwback to the 1970s. There's the jazzy and soulful ballad *Look At Me*, *Look At U* and the grittier funk of *Stare*, which includes the *Kiss* guitar lick, thrown in as a knowing wink. *Screwdriver* puts in another appearance to lift the album at the halfway point, but in the main, this is classic-period Prince and we're in familiar territory. It's most notable for the inclusion of his protest song, *Baltimore*. Written after the death of Freddie Gray in



© Prince & NPG Records

police custody and the subsequent April 2015 riots in the city, which ended with local authorities declaring a state of emergency on its streets, the song is a plaintive plea for peace: "We're tired of cryin' and people dying / Let's take all the guns away."

EMERGENCY CALL

Until April 2016, there was nothing to suggest Prince was in anything but the rudest of health. Apparently teetotal and a vegan, he was in the process of recording a new album and had been gigging just a week before his death. His final one-man show was at the Fox Theatre in Atlanta, Georgia, as part of the Piano & A Microphone Tour on Thursday 14 April.

After the gig – which had been rescheduled following a previous bout of ill health – Prince's private plane made an unscheduled landing at Quad City International Airport in Moline just after 1am on Friday 15 April and the star was immediately transported by ambulance to a nearby hospital.

A representative explained to the press that he'd been hospitalised as a precautionary measure following a bad case of the flu.

He was released three hours later and made an appearance at a party in Minnesota the next day, telling fans to "wait a few days before you waste any prayers". It was an ominous and portentous statement about what was to come, though in the days after his hospital visit, Prince was spotted by numerous members of the public around his hometown of Minneapolis. He went record shopping and even attended a show at the city's Dakota Jazz Club where he had a private table. Employees at the venue explained that nothing appeared out of the ordinary as he came and went via his usual private side door.

But their confidence in the star's health was sadly misplaced. At 9.40am on Thursday 21 April, Paisley Park staff went to look for Prince after he missed a routine holistic medical appointment. After his body was found in a lift at the complex, the emergency services were called. He failed to respond to CPR from the ambulance crew and was declared dead at 10.07am. He was last seen alive at 8pm the previous evening when a friend had dropped him off at home. It is believed Prince spent his last night alone and that his body could have lain undetected for several hours.

As the news travelled around the world, fans flooded to Paisley Park to pay their respects. Others gathered outside First Avenue, the historic downtown Minneapolis nightclub where several scenes for *Purple Rain* were filmed. Similar vigils and celebrations sprang up across the States. In Brooklyn, filmmaker Spike Lee hosted an all-Prince street party where he asked attendees to wear purple in the star's honour. New York City's Apollo Theater and Hard Rock Cafe also paid tribute and fans gathered and danced at a candlelight vigil in honour of Prince outside the Warner Theatre in Washington, DC.

A visibly moved Stevie Wonder was interviewed by CNN on the evening of Prince's death. He told the station: "He was a great musician. He loved music and playing his instruments. The times that we spent jamming together were amazing. He was very cognisant of what his responsibility was as a musician and a human being. It's heartbreaking to see this man, who was so talented, be taken away from us but I know that the Almighty God has far greater things for him to do, eternally. I just hope we celebrate his music and the purpose that he fulfilled."

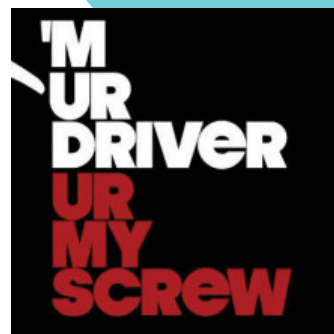
THE GOLD STANDARD

SINGLES 2010 TO 2016

SCREWDRIIVER

DOWNLOAD-ONLY SINGLE, 2013

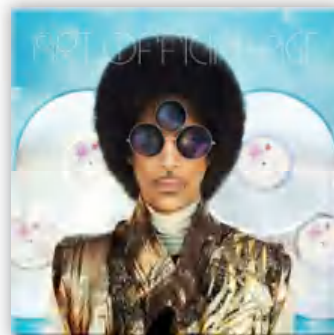
Heavy on the double entendres and bursting with brattish attitude, this was some way to introduce his new backing band, 3rdeyegirl. Its lo-fi video saw Prince getting down in a spirit hood and playing damn fine rock'n'roll guitar. For a 55-year-old man who was in his fourth decade of making music, to sound like a snotty teenager in a garage band was no mean feat. And it's especially mouthwatering that a trio like 3rdeyegirl, which has essentially come from a background of jazz funk, could kick out the jams in such devastatingly brutal style. It features on the *HITnRUN Phase Two* album.



CLOUDS

DOWNLOAD-ONLY SINGLE, 2014

Repaying the favour after he played a mini-gig in her front room, London-born singer Lianne La Havas appears on this bonkers slice of retro disco funk. Apparently waking Prince up from 45 years in suspended animation, the moral of this whimsical slice of sci-fi seems to be that we'd be all much better off in space. It's a mish-mash of ideas that comes with one more pearl of wisdom: "You should never underestimate the power of a kiss on the neck, when she doesn't expect." Gentlemen, take note.



BALTIMORE

DOWNLOAD-ONLY SINGLE, 2015

Rarely one for explicit political commentary, Prince made an exception with this protest song following the death in police custody of Freddie Gray in the Maryland city. Wrapped in a sweet melody, there's no doubting the sincerity of Prince's lyrics: "If there ain't no justice then there ain't no peace." It's simple, heartfelt plea for a change in America's gun laws, a call for peace and an end to police brutality, is powerfully direct. "We're tired of cryin' and people dying / let's take all the guns away," he adds. As with *Screwdriver*, the track was also included on *HITnRUN Phase Two*.



FREE URSELF, 2015

DOWNLOAD-ONLY SINGLE

Prince's final single released in his lifetime first appeared as an exclusive track on Jay-Z's streaming service, Tidal, *FREE URSELF* was an unassuming slice of uplifting synth pop. "Life is what you make it / Be the best that you can be / Now's the time / Take your place in history." On the face of it, the lines are a simple piece of self-help advice, but his death undoubtedly imbues them with an added poignancy. This won't be the end, of course, as it's hard to believe more releases from his vault won't see the light of day in the future.



3rd Day of the Week's Donna Grantis,
Hannah 'Ford' Welton
and Ida Nielson



"I'm also glad that I was able to say 'I love you' the last time I saw him."

In accordance with his Jehovah's Witness faith, which required his body to be cremated within a week, a service for Prince took place on Saturday 22 April. Prince's family and friends, among them, percussionist Sheila E and long-time friend Larry Graham, were said to have attended the small, private service.

FINAL CHAPTER

Following Prince's death, various commentators have speculated that his announcement he was finally writing an autobiography was evidence that the singer knew his health was failing and time was running out. Prince told guests at a private event in March the book, due to be published in 2017, was to be titled *The Beautiful Ones*,

and would cover his first childhood memories through to his triumphant Super Bowl halftime show of 2007. To date, it's thought that the star had only officially finished 50 pages of the first manuscript. It's not known if any more material has been completed.

Just two months before Prince's own death, his former girlfriend Denise Matthews – better known as Vanity – passed away from renal failure following reported earlier battles with addiction. Like Prince, she also died aged 57.

Within a week of the singer's death, his former backing band The Revolution announced that they would be reuniting in his honour for a series of shows. The band featured on three of his albums – *Purple Rain*, *Around The World In A Day* and *Parade*. Members of the outfit, including Wendy and Lisa, also featured on his studio album *1999*.

Following his death, sales of Prince's music mushroomed. He sold 1,400 records in the three days prior to his death; in the same period afterwards, that figure had risen to almost 580,000.

For years, Prince fans have speculated about the existence of an archive of unreleased material, and the contents of the vault have now taken on almost mythical proportions. Such was the star's astonishing work ethic, it's estimated that more than 70 per cent of his recorded output has never seen the light of day. Many believe there is comfortably enough material to see a new Prince album released every 12 months for the next 100 years.

Prince's former sound engineer, Susan Rogers, started the vault when she began working for the singer in 1983. She told the *Guardian* in a recent interview: "This is his legacy. We need to protect these things. It's an actual bank vault, with a thick door. It's in the basement of Paisley Park. When I left in '87, it was nearly full. Row after row of everything we'd done."

Apart from the vast swathes of unreleased studio work, his saxophonist Eric Leeds also claims that Prince has multitrack professional

recordings of all of his live shows, too.

Added to that, New Power Generation drummer Michael Bland recently said there are two other feature-length Prince movies that have never seen the light of day.

Prince's biographer Matt Thorne explained to the BBC that although the fans think in terms of years and decades, for Prince, it was more in terms of centuries. "He thought they'll come out in 200 or 300 years. It's just going to be such a long game and we're not going to see – unless we're very lucky – the main fruit of the vault being released in our own lifetime."

Little more than a week after his death, it was reported that The Bremer Trust – which was appointed as administrators of the star's estate, as he died without making a will – had drilled the vault open. It was thought Prince was the only person who knew the security access code. ■

MANY BELIEVE THAT THERE IS
COMFORTABLY ENOUGH MATERIAL TO
SEE A NEW PRINCE ALBUM RELEASED
EVERY YEAR FOR THE NEXT 100 YEARS

POP UP President Obama's tribute to Prince: "As one of the most gifted and prolific musicians of our time, Prince did it all... He was a virtuoso instrumentalist, a brilliant bandleader, and an electrifying performer."



Prince wowed the crowd with a hit-packed set at a fundraiser for the Autism Rocks charity in February 2015



WE GOT THE LOOK

PRINCE WAS NEVER AFRAID
TO TAKE RISKS WITH FASHION.
FLAMBOYANT, BOLD AND TRULY UNIQUE, HIS
STYLE WAS THE PERFECT REFLECTION OF HIS MUSIC

MARK LINDORES

WE all know about the explosive live performances, the era-defining hits and the box-office blockbuster, yet they all amount to only half the story. Here, we look at Prince's killer fashion sense and how it evolved throughout his purple reign, taking in nudity, androgyny and a dose of controversy.

In the four decades that Prince was in the public eye, he never looked anything less than impeccable. His larger-than-life persona belied his diminutive stature; he was the consummate rock star, always camera-ready, with irrepressible style that defied age, race, gender – and sometimes even gravity.

Prince's style started to evolve on his first major tour in support of the *Dirty Mind* album in 1980. Having assembled a strong backing band (the foundation of The Revolution), the Prince who took to the stage to support *Super Freak* star Rick James was a different person to the shy introvert who had performed with his back to the audience at early shows. He had grown in confidence and being part of a band gave him the freedom to push the dynamism he exuded in the studio onto the stage.

Wearing just a trenchcoat, bikini briefs, stockings and his trademark high-heeled boots (which he

famously claimed he wore "because the ladies love them", not because he was short), he prowled the stage grinding his hips and making out with keyboard player Gayle Chapman as he sang erotically charged jams about incest and oral sex.

This was much to the chagrin of the tour's headliner James, who accused Prince of stealing his act, but while Prince had obviously taken cues from James' trademark lewdness for his performance, he blended it with elements from Sly Stone, Little Richard and James Brown

BY TEAMING TRADITIONALLY FEMALE CLOTHING WITH A RAW MASCULINE SEXUALITY, PRINCE WAS CREATING HIS OWN MYTHOLOGY

to create something unique. By teaming traditionally female clothing with a raw masculine sexuality, he was

creating his own mythology. He would tackle the confusion directly on his next album, *Controversy*. "Am I black or white / Am I straight or gay?" he sang on the title track.

His perverse live reputation attracted the attention of The Rolling Stones, who asked Prince to open for them at their shows in LA in 1981. He dressed in typically risqué fashion, and the gigs were a disaster. Stones fans, perplexed by his sonic sleaze, hurled bottles, shoes, and racist and homophobic insults at Prince, forcing him to cut short his set.



Prince in 1981,
already showcasing a
sharp sense of style

HELEN HIATT

1986 TO 1991

After a set decorator friend got her a small job helping to “fix cushions and curtains” on the set of *Purple Rain*, Helen Hiatt found herself typing up scripts and doing menial tasks, and eventually ended up working in the wardrobe department.

She began working with Prince full-time in 1986 after he returned from shooting *Under The Cherry Moon* in the south of France. He was looking for someone to run the wardrobe department once the Paisley Park complex was finished. He offered Hiatt the job, which consisted of her coming up with different ways to decorate a tailored look with buttons, ruffles or patterns to paint on his clothes in order to realise Prince’s vision.

“I think the Lovesexy Tour was the best I was involved in,” says Hiatt. “We started writing on all his clothes, and the clothes all had graphics on them. On opening night in Paris, he came to me and said, ‘Can you write Minneapolis on the sleeve?’ And I was like, ‘Sure, it’s only an hour before show time’. He was thinking of every last detail up to the last minute. He was an artist right down to the clothes he wore.”

Hiatt left Paisley Park in 1991 to become a costume designer for television and film.



Prince rocking Helen Hiatt’s ‘Minneapolis’ sleeve design on the Lovesexy Tour

A more successful stop was Prince’s first London gig at the Lyceum in June 1981. Although by no means a sell-out, the concert was filled with the preening poseurs from London’s club scene, and their foppish finery made the underwear-flashing star feel positively underdressed. Impressed by what he saw in the crowd, Prince was taking notes.

By the time 1999 was released the following year, he had toned down his flesh-flashing and adopted purple as his signature colour. His latest style was a glam twist on his *Dirty Mind* regalia; designer Cynthia Vargas Sieloff recalls how she landed the job of creating one of Prince’s most iconic garments.

“I first met him on the *Dirty Mind* Tour,” she says. “At that point I was a costume designer and he didn’t wear costumes!” Nonetheless, in 1982, Cynthia received a plane ticket to Minneapolis and a note that read “Bring your machine”.

On arrival, Cynthia discovered that Prince was preparing for his Triple Threat Tour and had sketches of the purple trenchcoat he wanted her to make for him – with one condition. “He was the only one who could wear purple. I had to dress his band and The Time – his opening act – in some other colours,” she said.

The purple coat would be the catalyst for the look that would define his regency period. With the release of *Purple Rain* in 1984, Prince became rock royalty and, dressed in his finery of high-waisted pants, ruffle shirts, paisley swirls, pearl buttons, high-heeled boots and heavily-kohlled eyes, he looked the part too.

CHALLENGING NORMS

Prince’s look for *Purple Rain* was amped-up new romanticism, obviously inspired by the pansexual club freaks who had packed out his London show a few years earlier. “His early outfits were things held together with chains, lots of black clothing, and then suddenly he was very flamboyant,” says Marie France, who was the film’s costume designer, along with Louis Wells.

“He was already wearing his purple cloak when we started working with him, but it was stage clothing and good for the performance scenes – we had to find fabrics that would work well when seen close up. Right away, he loved wearing lace. It was a mixture of romanticism and punk, encompassing multiple genres, just like his music.”

“He told me he would call the film *Purple Rain* because purple was the colour of royalty, and he thought of himself as a musical majesty,” Wells says. “He wasn’t afraid to challenge stereotypes or gender biases. He knew if he wore it, it would be great.”

Prince’s Francophilia lasted another two years. Louis and Marie continued working with him through the *Purple Rain* Tour, the *Around The World In A Day* era (including his cloud-patterned suit from the *Raspberry Beret* video), and all of the costumes from Prince’s next film, *Under The Cherry Moon*, a 1930s-style romp shot in black and white in which Prince played a gigolo.

For *Parade*, the film’s soundtrack, and its accompanying tour, Prince displayed a more stripped-back aesthetic. His hair was cut much shorter and slicked-down and his wardrobe choices now displayed a new minimalism. He had dropped the ruffles and fur stoles in favour of crop tops, waist chains and boxy, colour-blocked suits for the tour.

Prince’s style took on a life of its own after the building of Paisley Park, his one-stop entertainment complex and the epicentre of his output. As well as recording studios, filmmaking facilities and sound

One of Prince's most iconic outfits teamed sparkling pastels with a ruffled shirt and lace gloves



stages, it housed Prince's own wardrobe department, where a 'craft force' worked round the clock to produce his clothes (on a series of Prince-sized mannequins to free him from the burden of fittings).

The designers and seamstresses often came from theatre or dance company backgrounds, as they had a technical knowledge of the function of clothes during live performance. A design background wasn't so important, because many of Prince's looks came from his own ideas.

As well as creating clothing for the stage and videos, the craft force also produced his leisurewear – Prince maintained his superstar persona 24/7; he was never out of character. The Revolution's Lisa Coleman told journalist Alan Light that Prince had been that way since a time in the early days when he had been seen out in public looking less than his perfect self. "One time in Minneapolis, really early on, some girls saw him walking down the street and said, 'Is that Prince?' and the other one said, 'Nah', like he didn't look good that day. And that changed his life forever," she says.

GANGSTA GLAM

Helen Hiatt and the late Jim Shearon were two of Prince's longest-standing designers. It was Helen who coloured him peach and black for *Sign O' The Times*. When a promo image for the album appeared, showing a lean, boyish figure in a peach mini skirt with a giant heart hiding its identity, the rumour mill went into overdrive, claiming that it was Prince's visual representation of Camille (his female voice on the album), only for it to be unveiled as Cat, his new backing singer/dancer.

As well as *Sign O' The Times*, Helen worked on the polka-dot glam slam of *Lovesexy*, the one-shouldered form-fitting jumpsuits from *Graffiti Bridge* and the Nude Tour and created his Gemini character for *Batdance* – a hybrid of Batman and The Joker.

By the 90s, Prince had embraced rap, acquired a new band in the New Power Generation and was touting a look he termed "Gangster Glam", which saw him emanate a more *braggadocio* machismo that we hadn't seen from him before.

Inspired by Scorsese's *The Godfather III* and

Barbarella, Diamonds And Pearls-era Prince appropriated hip-hop culture in his own way. He drew on gangsta rap's fixation with guns

by crafting a gun-shaped microphone, flaunted his wealth by featuring his Chiquita Yellow sports car in his videos (yellow was the new purple), wore bling-encrusted cufflinks labelled "Horny" and "Insatiable" and recruited two new female dancers, Diamond and Pearl.

"HE WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO COULD WEAR PURPLE. I HAD TO DRESS HIS BAND AND HIS OPENING ACT IN OTHER COLOURS" CYNTHIA VARGAS

Form-fitting jumpsuits became a staple of Prince's wardrobe on the Nude Tour





Prince became the face of Versace in 1996, shocking both the music and fashion worlds

VERSACE.
1996

Considering he had constantly rallied against fashion and refused to wear anything that didn't have a Paisley Park Designs label stitched inside it for the best part of a decade, Prince's 1996 appointment as the face of Versace was an unprecedented move.

It sent shockwaves through both the fashion world and the music world. His agreement to star in an ad campaign for the label was especially surprising given that he was in the middle of his 'Slave' phase and ardently against being owned in any capacity.

However, Prince was friends with Gianni Versace and the alliance had been a masterstroke in publicity for *The Gold Experience*, the album he was releasing independently. Promo cassettes entitled *The Versace Experience*, featuring snippets of the tracks from the album, were distributed to the press along with Prince's ads for the label (still with 'Slave' written on his cheek), which were shot by celebrated photographer Richard Avedon.

The campaign was the beginning of a long-standing personal and professional relationship between Prince and the Versace family. Upon his death, a "devastated" Donatella Versace said Prince was one of her closest friends and his legacy would be for people to "respect their own soul and never trade their own individuality."



At this time, Prince was rocking a teased hairdo he called "the typhoon" (when he wasn't wearing his do-rag), with perfectly groomed facial hair and sporting suits that had been inspired by *The Great Gatsby* and 70s pimps, as well as loose-fitting tunic-style suits to accommodate his more complex choreography.

He unveiled his new look, the first to be orchestrated by his new designer Stacia Lang, at one of his most memorable performances – the 1991 MTV Awards –

HE PERFORMED IN A ROMAN ORGY-BASED SET, REplete WITH WRITHING DANCERS, OVER WHOM HE HELD COURT IN A LASER-CUT YELLOW SUIT WITH THE CHEEKS CUT OUT

where he performed *Gett Off* in a Roman orgy-based set inspired by Caligula, replete with writhing dancers, over whom he held court in a laser-cut yellow suit with the cheeks cut out. It was his most successful period since *Purple Rain* and one of his most stylish.

The sartorial elegance carried on throughout 1992's *Love Symbol* album, its accompanying rock opera *3 Chains O' Gold*, the Act I/II tours and throughout much of the 90s. With his perfectly coiffured hair, high-waisted pants (a staple of the Prince silhouette, because they elongated the legs) and embroidered bolero jackets, Prince's pimped-up matador incarnation was immaculate.

There was the odd exception. His infamous struggle with his record label led to an identity crisis that manifested itself in his look; he was known to perform in a peaked leather cap with gold chains covering his face, or covering his face entirely with a scarf to hide his identity while performing as Tora Tora, the lead singer of the NPG. Most famous was his predilection for appearing in public with the word 'Slave' written on his cheek, following his name change to ʘ to emancipate himself from his record contract with Warners.

While his public image suffered and his record sales dropped as a result of the chaos and disorder that

STACIA LANG

1991 TO 1994

Stacia Lang had been working with the New York City Ballet and outfitting Broadway musicals before she moved back to Minnesota. She heard of a vacancy at Paisley Park and applied. "I got hired as a pattern maker," Stacia recalls. "I eventually showed Prince my sketches, and I ended up as his designer. It was a three-year gig and was a designer's dream come true.

"I did his infamous butt-out costume for the MTV Music Awards. It was crazy, because that was his idea – he wanted to shock, as he always did. His secretary came to me and said, 'Listen, you better sit down, because I want to tell you what Prince wants for the MTV Music Awards.' So then I designed two different versions, one with more coverage and one with less coverage. When I took my sketches in to his office for him to look at, he looked at them both and pointed to the one with less coverage. I was like, 'Oh God, how are we going to make this happen?' We had to do it in two days!"

Stacia left Paisley Park in 1994 after landing a job as a costume designer in LA. Her credits include *Burlesque* and *Tron: Legacy*.



Prince's guitars were as big a part of his outfits as his flamboyant clothing

surround the release of new music, his sense of style remained impeccable. He wore red velvet in the video for *The Most Beautiful Girl In The World*, and donned silk shirts with symbol-embossed sequinned waistcoats and gold ear cuffs on his Ultimate Live Experience Tour. As always, his guitars were lacquered in the exact same shade as his outfits.

For the first time in almost a decade, he also began wearing clothes from designers other than those in his in-house creation team. In 1996, he appeared in an ad campaign for Versace – the only fashion label he endorsed publicly – but still had 'Slave' on his face.

At the end of the 90s, Prince experimented with dreadlocks, cornrows and an electric-blue vinyl jumpsuit accessorised only with a chain belt and his omnipresent love-symbol pendant.

EXPERIMENTAL UNTIL THE END

As the new millennium dawned, Prince became a Jehovah's Witness and renounced his more provocative work. He also took on a more subdued style and was seen almost constantly wearing loose-fitting silk creations that resembled hooded pyjamas.

Later, he seemed to rediscover his mojo and displayed a much more mature style, increasingly relying on traditionally tailored suits from designer Willie Scott with high starched collars, or pinstripes and double-breasted jackets – as seen when he duetted with Beyoncé at the Grammy Awards in 2004 and on his Musicology Tour.

This slick aesthetic continued into his *3121* era and his now-legendary performance at the 2007 Superbowl Halftime Show. With his turquoise suit and orange shirt offset by his purple love-symbol guitar, the performance was a sartorial highlight as well as an artistic one, and is now regarded as his last truly iconic moment.

In his final years, Prince appeared relaxed and carefree, and that was reflected in his bold fashion choices. He appeared as a human billboard at the 2010 BET Awards, dressed in a garish silkscreened silk tunic emblazoned with the Debbie McGuan-designed artwork of his *20Ten* album and, more recently, teamed his perfectly formed afro with avant-garde Coco and Breezy Dotson-designed 3rd Eye sunglasses that evoked his experimental heyday. It is only fitting that his reign was filled with colour until the very end. ■



Stacia Lang designed two versions of this legendary costume. Prince chose the one with "less coverage"

© Press Association Images



Minneapolis

PRINCE'S HOME TOWN BECAME A HOTBED OF MUSICAL TALENT CENTRED ON THE RIVALRY BETWEEN ONE OF THE DECADE'S BIGGEST POP STARS AND THE WORLD'S HIGHEST-EARNING PRODUCERS

MARK FRITH



Minneapolis ain't huge. In fact, in terms of numbers, it barely scrapes into the Top 50 US cities, with just over 400,000 residents. But when one of those residents was Prince, that doesn't matter, because Minneapolis will always be known as Prince's hometown. It was Prince who earned the city its place in the list of legendary US music cities, but the story of Minneapolis isn't just his story – it's also the story of two musicians-turned-producers who broke away from his shadow to create history of their own.

Born Prince Rogers Nelson in the scorching hot summer of 1958, Prince's mum Mattie and dad John were both singers. Although never as 'hands-on' as Michael and Janet Jackson's father (more of him later), John particularly encouraged Prince and his sister Tyka in their musical endeavours (legend has it that Prince was writing songs on his dad's piano at the age of seven), but a happy childhood was to be torn asunder when Prince's parents separated when he was 10 and his sister eight.

The split was led to a deeply unhappy period for the siblings, with the older Prince bearing the brunt. A highly

fractious relationship with his mother's new husband led to him moving back in with his father who, in time, threw him out after finding his newly teenage son in bed with a girl (starting as he meant to go on, clearly). This latest shift in living arrangements would prove to be one of the most important in the young boy's life, because it led to him moving in with the neighbours, a family called the Andersons, and forming a deep friendship and musical kinship with the family's son, Andre. This was to be the first of Prince's many collaborations; the pair shared a living space, went to school together, and also formed a band that played at parties in the local area. Prince was already highly proficient at piano and guitar, and loved singing, too. He'd found his vocation – and he wasn't even 16.

Prince spent the next year or two writing, but as he turned 17, he became impatient and began to tell those closest to him that it was time to get serious. After securing a management deal with Owen Husney, a Minneapolis businessman, Prince made a demo and bagged a deal with Warner Brothers – not just any deal, but one that gave Prince full creative control and ownership of publishing rights. He was just 18.

With an efficiency that would become his trademark, Prince released his first album, *For You*, in April 1978. His prodigious talent was there to see on the album's sleeve notes, which noted that Prince had played all 27 instruments on the album. One tour and 18 months later, there was a second album – *Prince* – which reached the Billboard Top 30 album chart, and a big hit single in *I Wanna Be Your Lover*, which would go on to sell a million copies. The following year there was a third album – *Dirty Mind* – and the year after that a fourth, *Controversy*. Each grew in profile and sales, and a series of TV appearances and even a support slot with The Rolling Stones saw him gain a reputation for great songs, filthy lyrics and exhausting live performances.

That was just to be the beginning, though, as 1981 saw Prince embark on two huge projects. One was a new album – a double – called *1999*, that would eventually be released in late-1982 and has to date sold three million copies. It also produced two career-defining hits, *1999* (a minor hit here in early 1983, a far bigger hit in 1985 and, of course, 1999) and *Little Red Corvette*, a huge MTV favourite and Prince's first US Top 10 hit.

The other project was a new band, an offshoot act who Prince would produce and perform virtually all the music for, while a Prince lookalike (the also-diminutive Morris Day) took on lead vocals. They were called The Time, and Prince wanted them to carry on his trademark sound (funky, danceable, chart-friendly) while he went off in a different direction.

Although they had neither a Top 40 single nor album in the UK, The Time were big news in the States. Two members, bassist Terry Lewis and keyboardist Jimmy Jam, also gradually became producers of note. One particular recording session, with The S.O.S. Band in Atlanta, would lead to their departure from the band. A snowstorm stranded them in Georgia when they should have been playing a gig in San Antonio, Texas (leading to Prince playing Lewis's bass parts off-stage while another member, Jerome Benton, mimed them on stage). Prince dismissed them from the band. The recording session, however, became famous for more reasons than one; one of the songs recorded while the pair were snowed in was *Just Be Good To Me* – a worldwide hit and disco anthem and the making of the duo as producers.

The reasons behind the departure always rankled with Prince, but he had another new band project in which to invest his considerable energy. The Revolution were first credited on the album *1999* and would become his touring band for several years. But when you tour with Prince, the demands are huge... and unusual.

By this stage, Prince had already built up a repertoire of filthy songs, particularly those taken from *Dirty Mind*. One song, *Head* – about a sexual encounter between Prince and a soon-to-be-married young woman – required band member Gayle Chapman to simulate oral sex each night on tour. A devout Christian, Chapman soon baled, to be replaced by Lisa Coleman. A second band member left, for religious reasons, and Dez Dickerson's replacement was Coleman's lifelong friend Wendy Melvoin, a tall, striking guitarist who became a key part of the visual look of Prince's band. She also had a sister, Susannah, who was to be Prince's girlfriend through much of his mid-80s 'imperial' phase.

And what a phase: the soundtrack to his 1984 film *Purple Rain* spent 24 consecutive weeks at No. 1, the album sold 13 million copies, and the film of the same name won an Oscar. And, at last, some British hits – his first chart album with *Purple Rain* and a big Top 10 hit



Morris Day and Jesse Johnson of The Time on stage in Chicago, April 1983

with *When Doves Cry* (a deeply personal track, detailing much of the parental conflict so prevalent in his early life). At the following year's Brit Awards, Prince won two awards, and the combination of a pink feather boa, a mumbled speech and a huge minder accompanying him to the stage to collect both gongs, turned him overnight into the most talked-about pop star in the UK.

To the British papers, post-Brits, he became a kind of pantomime villain – that odd guy, the mini-Hendrix, with paranoia issues (what, he needed a

As his albums grew in profile and sales, Prince gained a reputation for great songs, filthy lyrics and exhausting live performances

minder? What were they going to do to him? Pluck out his feathers on the way to the stage?). To the American media, who hadn't yet experienced such a dramatic display of his eccentricity, Prince was the big-selling sensation with the pervy lyrics. With right-wing sentiment on the rise, his fame also put him in the firing line. Prominent US Senator Al Gore's wife Tipper was so disgusted to hear her

11-year-old daughter Karennia listening to the track *Darling Nikki* from the *Purple Rain* soundtrack (sample lyric: "I met her in a hotel lobby / Masturbating with a magazine") she decided to do something about it. Together with Susan Baker, then wife of US Treasury Secretary James Baker, she founded the Parents Music Resource Center (PMRC), which campaigned for stickers on record sleeves advising parents of unsuitable content for children. The PMRC also published its Filthy Fifteen, the records they most wanted banned, and *Darling Nikki* sat proudly at the top of the list. And as for number two on that chart...

The story of how Sheena Easton came to work with Prince starts off innocently enough, as Easton explained in an interview: "I was in the studio with one of Prince's producers and he suddenly said 'Prince sent over a track for you. We saw you on *The Tonight Show* and Prince said, I gotta write something for that girl'. And so he sent over *Sugar Walls* and it was one of those things where it was like, 'Here it is. If you want to do it, here's my number'."

The song, essentially Easton singing about her vagina, angered the PMRC, but the record made her the first artist to chart in all five Billboard Top 10s. Less controversial was the song Prince wrote for The Bangles, *Manic Monday*, another worldwide hit. Then, in late-1985, at the peak of his powers, Prince announced an end to touring (it would prove only temporary) and, the following year, he disbanded The Revolution. The hits were still coming (he had another huge album with *Around The World In A Day*), but this sudden move was a shock. The Revolution were his partners in crime, his creative peers. What was going on?

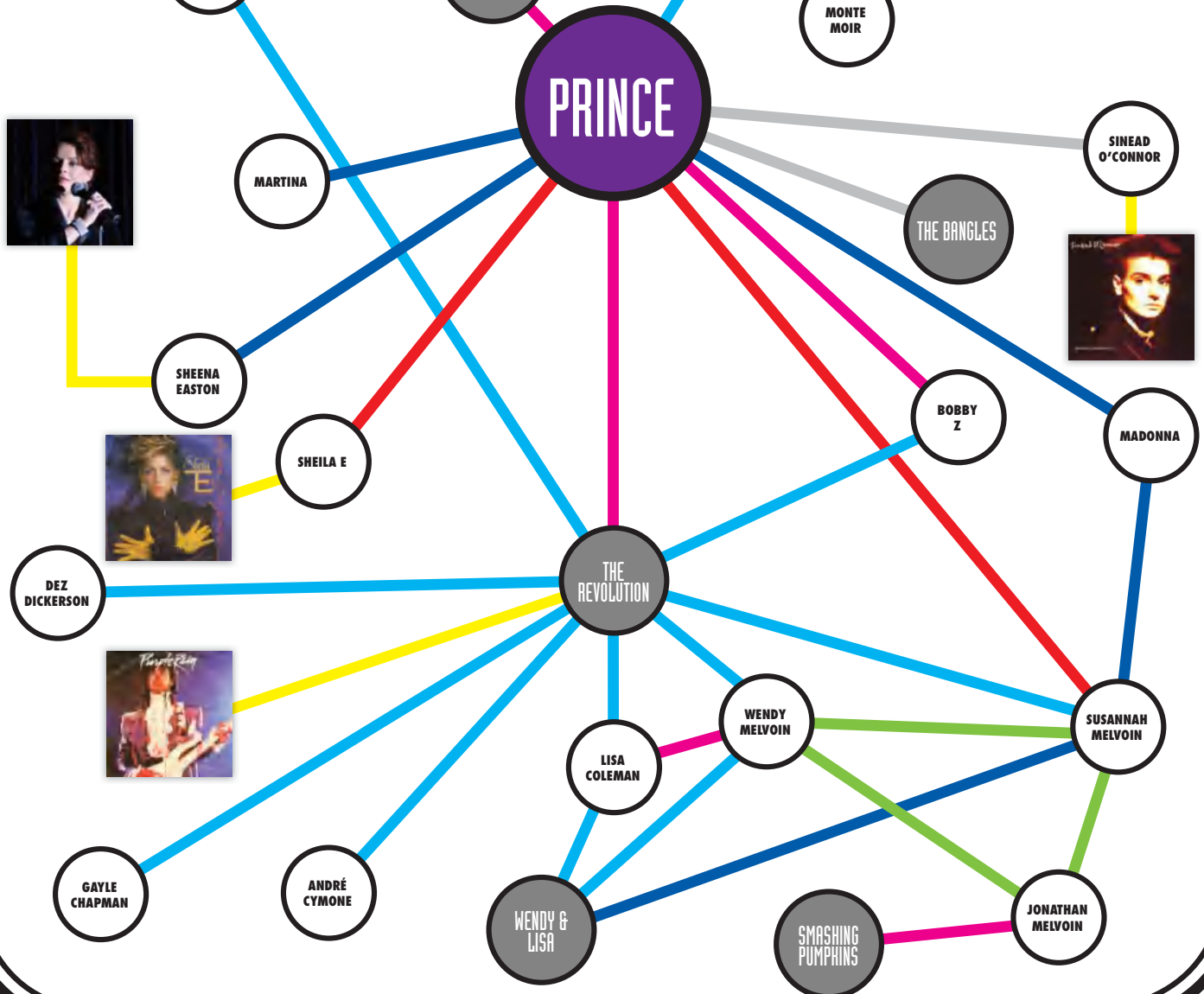
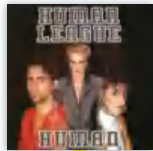
A year after being fired, Wendy Melvoin and Lisa Coleman were none the wiser. In an interview with the *LA Times* to mark the pair's anniversary of leaving the group and the release of debut Wendy & Lisa hit *Waterfall*, they were still confused about what had happened, and both say they never saw it coming. "If we'd been looking, there were probably signs," said Melvoin. "But maybe the signs were there and we just didn't want to see them."

Watching all of this from a short distance away, across town in Minneapolis, were two other people still sore about how they had been jettisoned from Prince's world – Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis. In the years since *Just Be Good To Me* they had been gathering industry cache and hit singles with Cherelle (1985's *Saturday Love*) and, in particular, with Alexander O'Neal (*If You Were Here Tonight* in early 1986 was the first of many 'solo' hits the three would share). All those triumphs, ➤



Minneapolis

- BAND
- ARTIST
- BAND MEMBER
- WORKED WITH
- SIBLING
- ROMANTICALLY ATTACHED
- PRODUCED
- COLLABORATED
- NEARLY JOINED
- WROTE SONG FOR
- CLASSIC TRACK



however, paled beside the success they had with Janet Jackson on a series of albums that began with *Control* in 1986.

Janet Jackson had spent much of the 80s adjusting to life as a devoted sister to the world's most famous person while also attempting to carve her own path. It was not easy. The Jackson family were a tight-knit operation and Janet wanted to break free. After a couple of moderately successful albums, recorded under her father's wing, Janet was introduced to Jam and Lewis by John McClain, a senior exec at her label, without her dad Joe knowing a thing about it. Joe was livid at McClain, but the damage (to him) was done. Janet had bonded with the two producers and plans were already being made to relocate her to Minnesota. Her dad was out – and Janet was glad. "I just wanted to get out of the house, get out from under my father," she reflected after the separation, "which was one of the most difficult things that I had to do, telling him that I didn't want to work with him again."

So Janet relocated from sunny LA to freezing cold Minneapolis, sans father/manager Joe, and holed herself up inside Jam and Lewis' swish new studio complex, Flyte Time (the name The Time went under before Prince got hold of them). It took Janet a while to adjust – she really hated the cold and between every take would rush to sit on the radiator in the corner of the studio to warm up – but the three were on a mission. This wasn't going to be any album: it would be, according to Jimmy Jam, "an album that would be in every black home in America... we were going for the black album of all time."

As the weeks went on and the three bonded, they created a series of brilliant, state-of-the-art pop records with lyrics that reflected Janet's emancipation. There was the first single *What Have You Done For Me Lately*, a song about asserting yourself in relationships; *Nasty*, a riposte to aggressive Romeos; and *Let's Wait Awhile*, the big ballad from the album and a paean to sexual abstinence. Six huge US hit singles, a seventh in the UK and worldwide album sales of 14 million copies. That's how you break free.

Next into the Flyte Time studios were The Human League, a little bruised after the disappointment of *Dare* follow-up *Hysteria* and in search of a new direction. The recording of *Crash* was beset by issues – the band's musicians were sidelined, both girls found the whole experience (and particularly the even-colder-than-Sheffield Minneapolis) "horrible" and Phil Oakey, who enjoyed the experience more than the others, grew to resent Jimmy and Terry's 'our way or the highway'



Janet Jackson congratulates Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis on their induction into the Hollywood Walk Of Fame, 1993

approach, where the band's songs were disposed of in favour of the producers' own. No matter, the sessions produced the band's second US No 1 single, *Human* and, in a 1995 interview with the website *Sound On Sound*, Oakey admitted the project had saved the band's career. "The Jam and Lewis album was just like being a puppet for four months. It was interesting to pick yourself out of the industrial north of England and to dump yourself in Minneapolis. It was a great experience – but it wasn't our album."

While Jam and Lewis were reaching dizzying heights, Prince entered a period of experimentation and independence

Next up was another Janet Jackson project, the lyrically adventurous *Rhythm Nation 1814*, and big hit singles including *Escapade* and *Miss You Much*. Although never truly loved by the critics ... *1814* sold more copies than *Control*, more than 20 million to date. The album was also to be a starting point for Jackson's first tour, which would go on to become the biggest debut tour in history.

The decade ended with another US No. 1 – George Michael's *Monkey* – but the 90s saw the duo reach new professional heights. Never short of confidence, Jam and Lewis entered into their third Janet collaboration – the album *Janet* in 1991 – with a wholly different financial approach. They wanted to become the world's best-paid producers and saw Jackson's label switch to Virgin as their opportunity to become just that. The bill? Three million dollars, a then unheard-of amount for producers.

Now the pair were seen as utterly integral to Jackson's fortunes, and Richard Branson's gamble paid off when the album delivered yet more worldwide hit singles (most notably *That's The Way Love Goes*) and matched *Rhythm Nation's* sales of 20 million. And then, in 1995, came probably their most high-profile hit – Janet and brother Michael's collaboration on *Scream*.

While Jam and Lewis were reaching dizzying commercial heights and pulling off deals that would have made their mentor proud, Prince entered a period of experimentation and independence. His first Revolution-less album, *Parade*, produced *Kiss and Girls And Boys*, while the second, *Sign O' The Times*, delivered a title track that was, to many, his finest moment (and one of the first hit songs to deal with the growing nightmare of AIDS) but these two both ushered in a period of considerable change in Prince's life. Album sales – particularly in the US – were falling, and arguments between artist and label grew. Prince was hesitant about touring, disagreements about which singles should be released were increasingly common, and as the 90s progressed, his attitude towards Warner Brothers became more and more militant.

In 1993, he declared he was no longer Prince, but instead an unpronounceable symbol (and so he swiftly became referred to as The Artist Formerly Known As Prince). His work rate stayed high, but in Prince's mind that was so he could 'earn out' his contract.

Then, at the 1995 Brit Awards, a new low. Having been flown over by his label, he appeared on stage with the word 'Slave' written on his face. Enough was enough, and later that year, 'Prince' and Warner Brothers parted company.

Prince was never able to recapture his 80s sales highs, but his gigs remained legendary right up to his death in 2016. Collaborators came and went – the latest, 3rdyegirl, were mainstays at most of his concerts during the last two years – but it was always Prince who remained Minneapolis' most famous son. Odd, determined, brilliant Prince. What will we do without him? ■

PRINCE

— 1958 - 2016 —

THE STARS REACT



SHEENA EASTON

It is impossible to imagine him not being here. The world of music was forever changed the day he picked up his guitar. His talent was breathtaking, his heart was kind, and all of us have been blessed to have had a glimpse into this sweet and magical soul.



KATY PERRY

And just like that... the world lost a lot of magic. Rest in peace Prince! Thanks for giving us so much...



NILE RODGERS

RIP our dearly beloved Prince. Tears and love on our tour bus. I'll never forget my brother. We've had good times.



WYCLEF JEAN

RIP to the king. Prince thank u for inspiring me to be a musician first and using this tool to heal people.



MADONNA

He changed the world! A true visionary. What a loss. I'm devastated. This is not a love song.



FOREST WHITAKER

Prince has left us
His soul touched us
His song reached us
We sing his praise
Rest gently in peace Prince.
You will be remembered



CHUCK D

I'm a man of words. I'm kinda speechless on losing Prince. It's like the Earth is missing a note. Little to say — only thing to do is play...



JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE

It would be silly to say that he has inspired our music... It's beyond that. He's somewhere within every song I've ever written. I am sad, but I will smile when I think of every second that I had the fortune of being in his company. We have lost our greatest living musician. But his music will never die.



PAUL MCCARTNEY

God bless this creative giant. Thanks, Prince.



CHAKA KHAN

I loved him, the world loved him. Now he's at peace with his father. Rest in power, Prince my brother.



SHEILA E

With the passing of Prince, my friend, my knight and everlasting ally, I... search for words and ways to make sense of the senselessness that this reality presents to us. How do we accept such a deep loss to our musical past, present, and future?

...Through [Prince's] music, we were able to express what seemed impossible to say. Through his creativity, we were able to imagine and dream the incredible, to create a new reality. Through his hard work and determination, we were able to believe in the ability to overcome those obstacles set before us.

Prince was a visionary. A dreamer and a believer. But most of all, he believed in those whom his music touched. To watch him perform was, as he encouraged, "to see the dawn". There was a newness, a freshness, a coolness that seemed to exude from his every pore.

I've been asked, "What was it like to create and perform music with Prince?" In truth, each time was different, constantly evolving. To describe one experience as an example of them all, would only... reduce the significance of the others... And as Prince would say, "That ain't cool." And that is the essence of Prince and the legacy of the music he leaves for us to enjoy. His music is different, each time, in the most magical of ways... Through his music he achieved the eternal. Through your love and support of him, past, present and future, he will remain our Prince. May your heart shine shades of purple, 4ever.

I know mine will.



SPIKE LEE

I miss my brother. Prince was a funny cat. Great sense of humor.



CORINNE BAILEY RAE

Prince, thank you and thank you and thank you and thank you. Every show with a two-hour aftershow. Giving so much. Relentless and kindness.



QUINCY JONES

RIP to Prince... a true artist in every sense of the word. Gone way too soon.



SAMUEL L. JACKSON

I'm crushed! Massive loss for us all! What a genius! Speechless.



OPRAH WINFREY

Prince, the doves really are crying now. Listening to your music. Remembering you. #RIPPrince



LENNY KRAVITZ

My musical brother... My friend... The one who showed me the possibilities within myself, changed everything, and kept his integrity until the end, is gone. I am heartbroken.



ALICIA KEYS

Prince was a gift and a genius. He showed us that we have no limits. His music left me forever changed.



CELINE DION

He truly is a legend and a hero of mine. RIP.



BRIAN WILSON

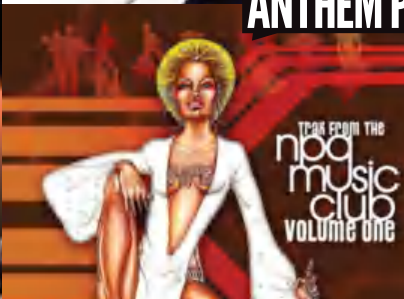
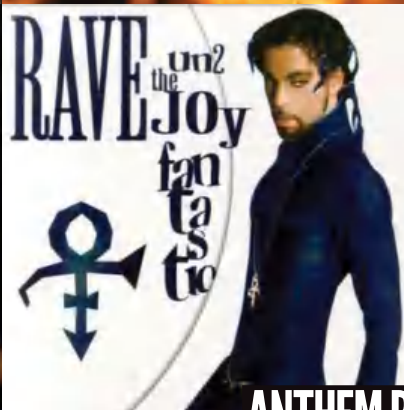
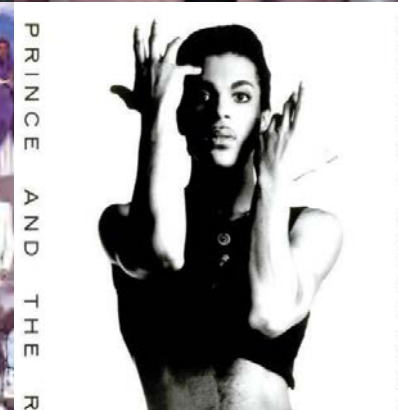
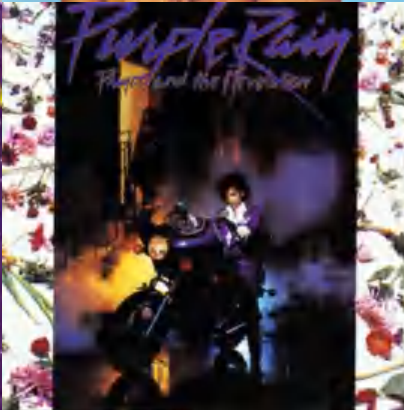
Musically, he could do it all: sing, play, arrange and produce. Love & Mercy.



BARACK OBAMA

Few artists have influenced the sound and trajectory of popular music more distinctly, or touched quite so many people with their talent. As one of the most gifted and prolific musicians of our time, Prince did it all: funk, R&B, rock 'n' roll. He was a virtuoso instrumentalist, a brilliant bandleader and an electrifying performer. "A strong spirit transcends rules," Prince once said — and nobody's spirit was stronger, bolder, or more creative. ■





ANTHEM PUBLISHING